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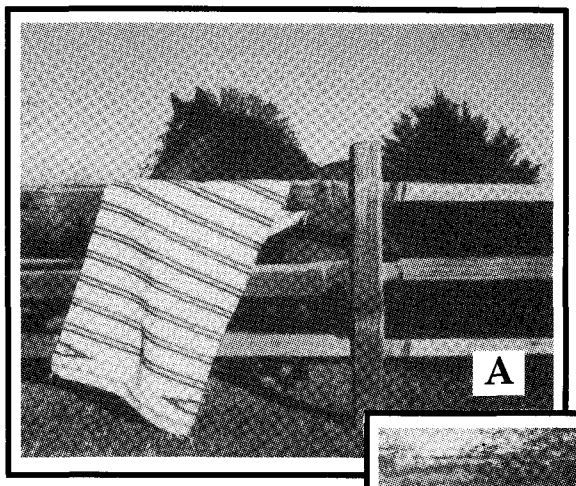

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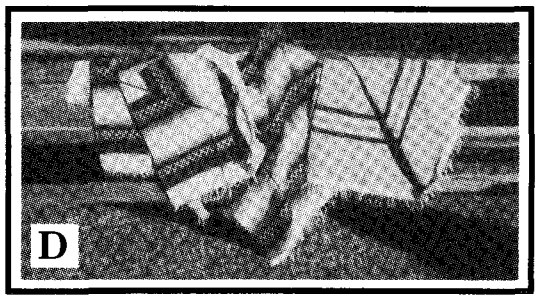

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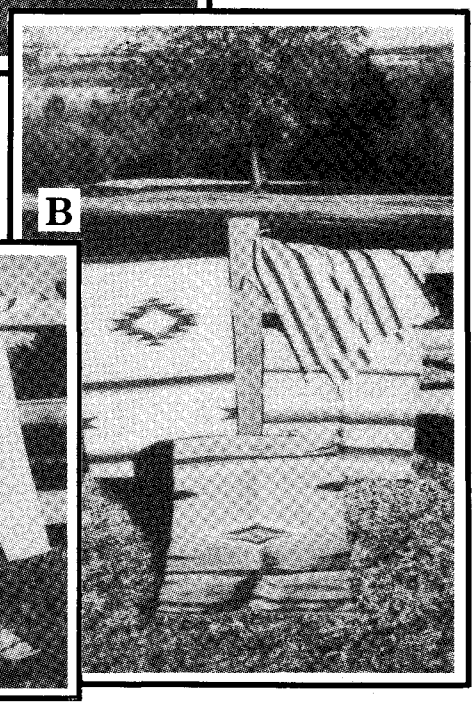

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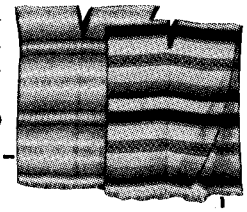

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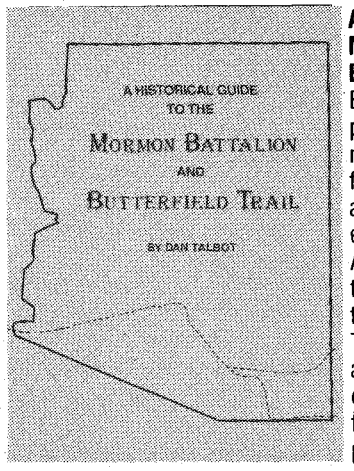

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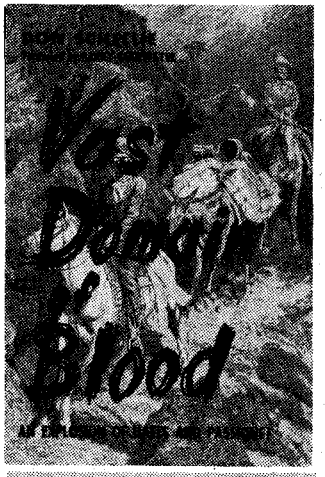

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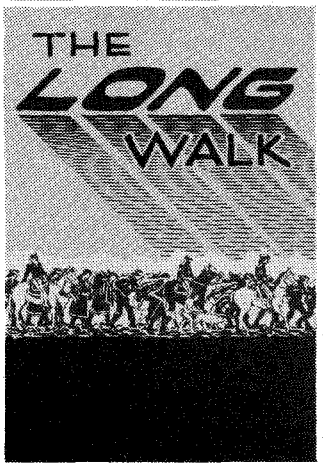

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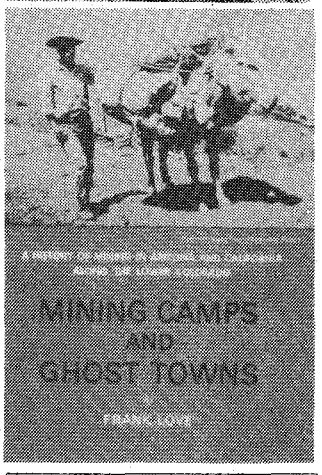

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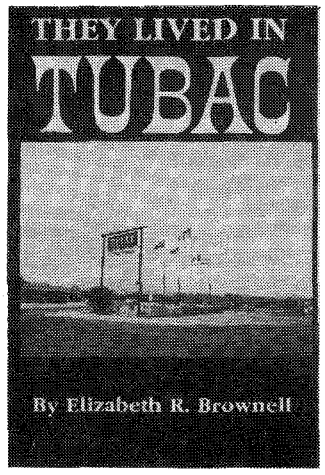

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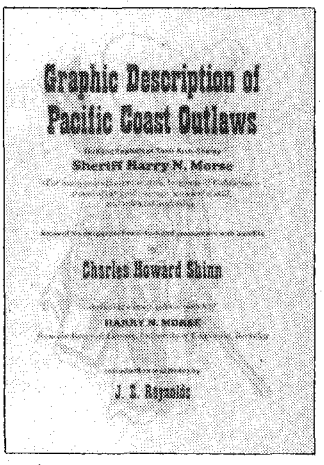

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TRUE WEST

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Whole No. 302

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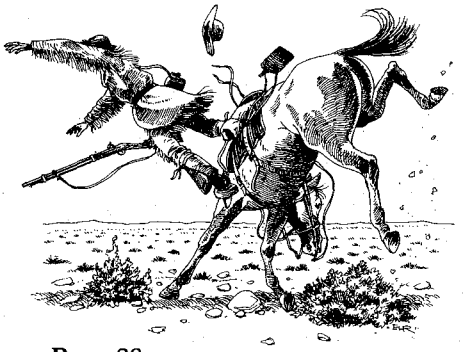

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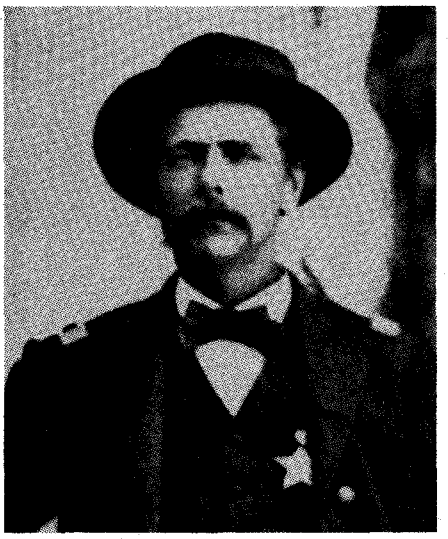
Bill Carlisle, photograph courtesy of the Wyoming State Museum.



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From the Editor

Howdy, folks!

This month's musings are about how editorial genius—at least in my case—is ninety percent old friends and ten percent sheer dumb luck. One of those old friends is Thomas F. Halferty, from Roswell, New Mexico. Mr. Halferty is a long-time TRUE WEST reader, and though he isn't a personal friend of mine, I'd shorely welcome the chance to change that. Last August he wrote,

> I have read your three magazines down through the years but have never read any story about Bill Carlisle, who termed himself the Lone Bandit and robbed the Union Pacific passengers in Wyoming four times down through the years from 1916 to 1919.
>
> He was captured in 1919 and the railroad really stuck it to him, so that he was given life at hard labor in the Wyoming state penitentiary at Rawlins. He escaped and was recaptured and finally through the efforts of a Catholic priest from Kemmerer, Wyoming, was paroled in 1936. He then wrote his autobiography, a copy of which I have, courtesy of my wife, who personally knew him, since he married a nurse in Kemmerer and my wife worked there for twenty years.
>
> If nothing has been published, perhaps you could get a writer to come up with a story.

I try to follow up on every story suggestion you all give me, but I was especially excited about this one because of Mr. Halferty's living connection with Bill Carlisle. So I sent a copy of his letter to Murray Carroll, who has written several solidly researched and lively articles about Wyoming history for TRUE WEST in recent years.

I knew that Murray could negotiate his way to the available primary sources on Bill Carlisle. He had lived in the area, gone to school there, and taught there. And having met Murray face-to-face at a Western Writers of America convention a few years back, I knew he was a particular variety of quiet-spoken Wyomingite for whom I have a special place in my heart.

My greatest hope was that Murray might be able to dig up at least enough information on Carlisle to write a short article. I was not at all prepared for his response, "I would like to see what I can do with Bill Carlisle. I have a very thin file on him, a copy of *Bill Carlisle, Lone Bandit*, and my memories of visiting with him when I was in high school and he owned a tourist court on the east edge of Laramie. I used to stop at the little store he ran and buy sardines and crackers and pass the time of day when I was on my way to climb Pilot Knob."

By then I knew how James Marshall felt when he discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848. With a little help from my editorial instincts and a big assist from Dame Fortune, I had sent Mr. Halferty's suggestion to the ideal writer. Murray's personal recollections had already begun to bring Carlisle to life for me as a reader.

A few months later Murray sent me not a short manuscript but a mammoth, fascinating account of Carlisle's outlaw days. In his cover letter, he reminisced, "As I was writing [the manuscript] I couldn't help thinking back to the times I bought things in the convenience store from him to take hiking, or took a girl to his restaurant after a dance for shrimp or chicken in a basket. I realized that I knew him, but that I really didn't know much *about* him until I researched this article."

The happy result is this issue's lead story, "The Last Cowboy Bandit." Although Murray modestly omitted his personal acquaintance with Carlisle from the article, I think it shines through in a tale that really puts flesh and bones on the old-time train robber.

Another old friend, Leslie Smith, contributed the beautiful opening illustration of Bill Carlisle. In the early 1980s, this pore mag changed owners and key personnel so often that even I sometimes doubted it would survive. As our production coordinator since 1987, Leslie was one of the people whose talents and dedication finally helped pull TRUE WEST through. Now she's "headed west" to Lubbock, Texas, and this is her last issue. Before she makes her getaway, though, all of us here at Western Publications want to thank her for a job well done and wish her the best.

John Joerschke

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Butch Cassidy's Return

I am a Montana native of eighty-five years and an avid reader of your mags. I can add some questions but no answers to "Showdown at San Vicente," by Anne Meadows and Daniel Buck (TRUE WEST, February 1993).

I am well acquainted with the Little Rocky Mountains in northern Montana and knew a number of the old-timers there. One old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kelsey, spent their entire lives there. I visited them a number of times. Charlie would tell me stories of the past that he knew for sure were true. He knew Kid Curry, Butch Cassidy, the Coburns, Jim Winters, Abe Gill, Jim Thornhill, and many others. I do not remember him mentioning the Sundance Kid.

He showed me the Curry hideout, Johnny Curry's grave, Jim Winters' grave, and told me who buried them, each on his own homestead. Winters took in a partner by the name of Abe Gill. Charlie and Abe went to the Mission church at Hays. Charlie sang in the choir there and played in an orchestra for dances.

Presumably Kid Curry came back and killed Winters for killing his brother, Johnny. Charlie showed me where some men sat on their horses in some willows waiting for Winters to come out of his cabin so they could shoot him. Abe Gill continued to live on the place but thought the Currys would come back and kill him, as they wanted the ranch. Abe sold the ranch and cattle to the Coburns for cash. He was never seen again. Charlie told me who killed Abe and what was done with the body, but I had to promise never to tell anyone.

Charlie told me that years later, he thought about 1915, Kid Curry showed up in the area with several men on horseback and rounded up about 400 horses that Jim Thornhill had left on his place when he went to Arizona with the Coburns. Charlie talked to the Kid several times. The other men called him Whiskers, as he was all whiskered out. He was going to drive the horses to Canada.

In 1925, the year Butch Cassidy is said to have visited his boyhood home at Circleville, Utah, he and another man drove a car to Landusky, Montana, the hangout for the Curry bunch for several years. When Butch got to his old place, a church picnic was being held there. Charlie was talking to his father-in-law, Greg Doney, when Butch walked up and greeted Greg, whom he knew. Butch said he would not stay for the picnic, as he did not want too many people to see him. He just came to see his old place. After he left, Charlie asked Greg if that

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wasn't Butch, and Greg said it was.

I know I have opened a big can of worms, but you thrive on that.—**Raymond Gray, Belt, Montana.**

Terrific Tonkawa Tribe

Congratulations on the terrific article, "Cannibal Heroes: Tough Little Tonkawas of Texas," by Charles M. Robinson III (TRUE WEST, March 1993). Over the years you have published many interesting articles on the Kiowas, Comanches, and other Southern Plains tribes. It is time that attention be focused on this lesser known group of Native Americans. Not only is the article informative, but the photos are exceptional. I specialize in identifying old photos, and I have never seen any of the Tonkawa photos on pages 32, 39, 40, and 41 published before. They remind me of the William Soule photos taken in and around Fort Sill in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Very little has ever been published on the Tonkawas, least of all photos of them. May I suggest that someday you consider doing a similar article on the Caddos. Fine job!—**David Carbaugh, Warren, Ohio.**

Quanah Parker's Mobile Home

I had a special interest in Roy Hester's question about Quanah Parker's house ("Answer Man," TRUE WEST, March 1993). In 1937 and '38, my parents lived about a half-mile from Quanah's legendary home northwest of Cache, Oklahoma. The Birdsong family, who lived in the house at the time, asked me to do some work for Mrs. Birdsong.

At the age of sixteen, I was thrilled to work in that beautiful house with its many wonderful souvenirs of Quanah Parker's. My younger sister and I got to sleep in his bedroom one night. The house has now been relocated at Eagle Park, in Cache. I go back to Cache often, and whenever I do I always go back to visit that stately old home.—**Mrs. John Schlumbohm, Klamath Falls, Oregon.**

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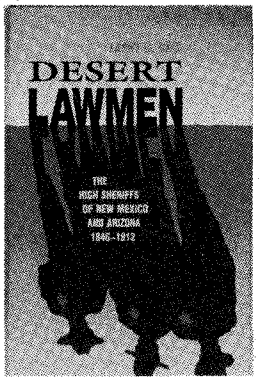

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Fort Churchill Celebration S

A mile or so from the main Reno-to-Las Vegas road in Nevada lie the sun-baked remains of Nevada's first and foremost military establishment, Fort Churchill. The fort will be the site of the Fort Churchill Celebration June 19-20, which will recall life in the 1860s with history lectures and living history reenactments.

Fort Churchill grew out of tensions between Paiute Indians and whites lured to the area by the Comstock Lode discovery. The Paiutes suffered through severe winters in 1858 and 1859 and endured added pressures when whites began depleting their food supplies.

In 1860 whites blamed the Indians for the deaths of two men in the so-called "Williams Station Massacre." (The fact that only money was missing from the station led Mark Twain and others to discount the possibility of Indian involvement.) Angry white settlers raised volunteer regiments in the area. However, full of vengeance and whiskey, they walked into an ambush near Pyramid Lake, where Indians killed seventy-six men—two-thirds of the command—including commander Major William Ormsby.

Captain Joseph Stewart and regular army troops from California plus an organized militia responded to the Pyramid Lake disaster. In the second battle of the Pyramid Lake war, Stewart's force defeated the Indians and ended whatever threat they posed to white settlement.

The regular army was ordered to fall

Relive Indian Territory Days

The Old West will come alive in central Oklahoma June 26-27, when El Reno hosts Fort Reno and Indian Territory Days. The event will include living history camps and exhibits by hundreds of reenactors.

The United States Army established Fort Reno on the North Fork of the Canadian River in August 1874 to protect the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian agency. In fact, the camp was first known only as Camp Near Cheyenne Agency, but the army officially designated it Fort Reno in 1876. The fort was important in the 1874-75 campaign against Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes, and the 1878-79 campaign against northern Cheyennes.

Reenactors will have displays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. Military reenactors, including units from Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas, Texas, and California, will recreate 1870s-era units of infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

Civilian displays are scheduled to include depictions of Boomers (those people who entered Oklahoma and Indian territories and agitated for the government to open them for settlement); craftsmen such as wheelwrights and blacksmiths; buffalo hunters; cowboys; wolfers, whom cattlemen hired to kill predators; lawmen, outlaws, and gunfighters; and plainsmen and explorers of the 1840s.

A townsite with a tent saloon (selling bottled root beer), featuring the usual saloon crowd of cowboys, gamblers, and saloon girls, will be open to visitors, as will a brush arbor school and church. Period fashion shows, food booths, vendors of period clothing and supplies, land run reenactments, and a Plains Indian camp with storytellers and dancers will round out the event.

Admission for adults is three dollars per day; one dollar per day for children ages five to twelve. Fort Reno is four miles west of El Reno on Old Route 66 and Business I-40, and one and one-half miles north of I-40 exit 119. For more information contact the El Reno Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 67, El Reno, Oklahoma 73036. The phone number is (405) 262-1188.

Courtesy of El Reno Chamber of Commerce

Living history camps and exhibits bring the past to life at Fort Reno and Indian Territory Days.

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; for June

back and establish a fort on the Carson River. Named after Sylvester Churchill, inspector general of the United States Army, Fort Churchill took shape in 1860–61 under Captain Stewart's direc-

(See **Churchill,** *page 10)*

Cowboy Hall of Fame Expands

One of the nation's largest museums of western historical artifacts and art is about to become even larger. The National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in northeast Oklahoma City has announced plans to add 160,000 square feet to the 60,000-square-foot facility.

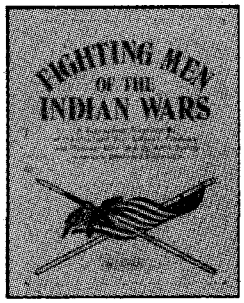
Cowboy Hall of Fame Public Relations Director Dana Sullivant said the project will cost between $20 million and $30 million. She said the exact cost is still tentative as work will progress in four phases and, "there is some leeway in phase four."

So far the private, non-profit musuem has raised about $9 million for the project. All funding will come from private and corporate sectors.

Groundbreaking for phase one is slated for next fall. Construction on that phase should be completed within six to eight months. Sullivant said the entire four-phase project, which also includes a major renovation of the existing structure, should be completed by 1995.

Ultimately the expansion project will take the form of two large additions, one east and one west of the present Cowboy Hall of Fame. The additions will contain both public areas and archival and curatorial sections. Sullivant said the additions will house major new acquisitions, including the new Joe Grandee Museum of the Frontier West.

Sullivant pointed out that, although several major acquisitions of art and artifacts have occurred in the last five years, no significant additions to the structure have been made since the Cowboy Hall of Fame opened in 1965.



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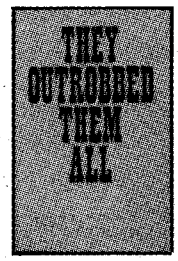

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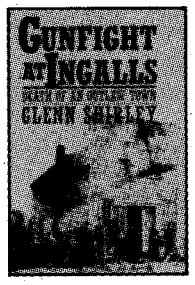

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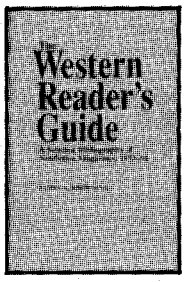

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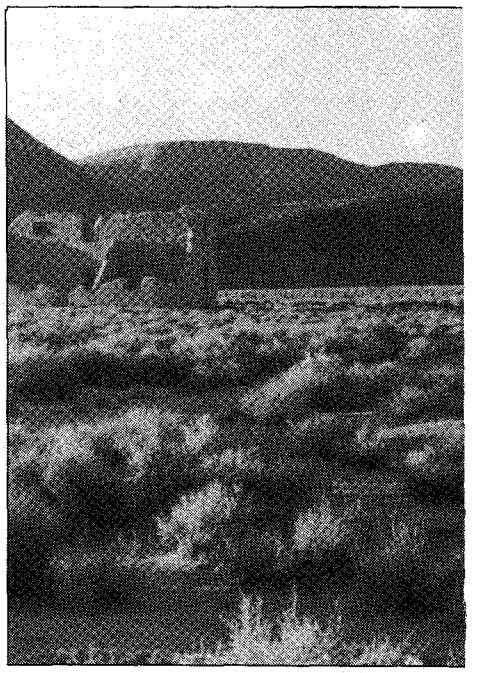

Sunset on the ruins of Fort Churchill.

Churchill *(continued from page 9)*
tion. The fort was located on the Emigrant Trail and the Pony Express route, both vital lines of communication.

Consisting of twenty-two adobe brick buildings and wooden frame structures, Fort Churchill cost ten times what comparable western forts did at the time. A board of inquiry investigated a projected cost of $192,000; costs were cut to $178,000.

Never a defensive position, Fort Churchill had no outer wall. It served as a base of operations for troops assigned to guard the Emigrant Trail and Pony Express route and respond to civil crises in the new Nevada Territory.

During the Civil War, regular troops went east, and California volunteers garrisoned the post until Nevada volunteers took over. Their theater of operations was as far south as Owens Valley in California, and as far north as the Nevada-Oregon border, where an Indian sniper killed post commander Colonel Charles McDermit in 1865.

Fort Churchill operated until 1869 when the army judged it too remote and downgraded it to a barracks, then to a depot. Samuel Buckland bought the old fort at auction in 1869 for $750.

Buckland took the wood, windows, roofs, and everything else he could salvage. From the 1870s to the 1930s the unprotected adobe eroded in the elements. The Daughters of the American Revolution held title to the fort and brought in the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s to lay new bricks and begin development of a park.

The DAR operated a museum on the grounds until the start of World War II.

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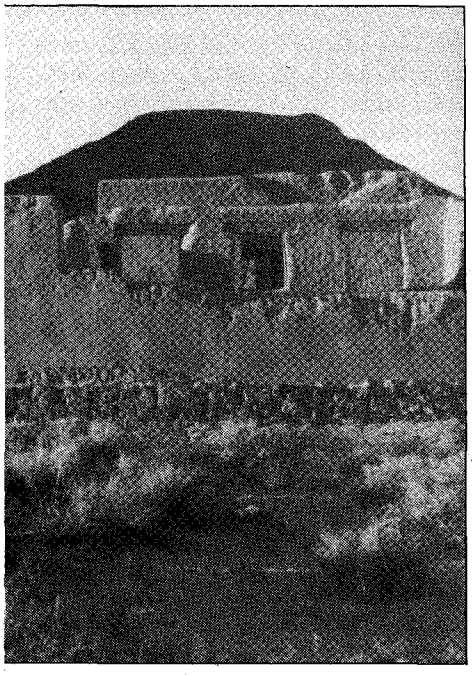

Courtesy of Mabel Huber

They deeded the fort to the Nevada Division of State Parks in 1957.

Since then a campground, picnic ground, and group area have been built at Fort Churchill. A blacksmith shop has been recreated, and Fort Churchill State Historic Park hosts many living history programs, talks, and events.

The Nevada Civil War Volunteers will host the Fort Churchill Celebration, which will include a flag-raising ceremony, a demonstration of cannon drills and procedures, battle skirmishes, a pony express relay, recreations of camp life, a fashion show depicting the dress of the 1860s, and a ladies' living history presentation. Topics for historical talks include Fort Churchill's history, blacksmithing, and the Pony Express.

Fort Churchill is east of Carson City and southeast of Reno. It is nine miles south of Silver Springs on state route 95. Take Old Fort Churchill Road north of the Carson River and go west one mile. The park and campground are open all year. Admission to a museum and the ruins is free. For more information about the fort or the celebration, write Fort Churchill State Historic Park, Silver Springs, Nevada 89429. The phone number is (702) 577-2345.

Western Roundup is a report on places to go and things to see associated with the history of the Old West. Submissions are welcome. Information on scheduled events should be submitted at least four months prior to the event. Items on historic places are also welcome. Send information including photos to: Western Roundup, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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Two-Handed Shootists

By CHUCK PARSONS

In the January 1993 TRUE WEST, I answered a question about gunfighters' firing their pistols with two hands by saying the pistols were designed for one-handed use and that a two-handed grip would have been awkward. I received several comments on that answer, two of which follow.

John Norwood of Arvada, Colorado, writes, "You are correct in stating the pistol was designed to be held in one hand for a close-range, last-resort weapon for defense. The Colt, Smith & Wesson, Remington, and other revolvers needed consistent, disciplined practice for accurate firing. Essentially the shootist needed these elements: consistent body stance and arm and shoulder placement, a snug or tight grip on the pistol, and proper pressure of thumb, triggerfinger, and heel of hand on the pistol. Patently, during the stress of a gunfight, neither opponent would—or could—check off each of these factors. Neither, in all probability, would there be any *aimed* shots fired. Even though gunfights with pistols were at close range, records . . . [include] more instances of opponents being only wounded, or narrowly missed, than fatally hit. The favorite weapon of the old lawman was the sawed-off shotgun. That big old ten- or twelve-gauge muzzle was demoralizing."

Gun collector Rex Macbeth, Mankato, Minnesota, writes, "Those of us who belong to shooting clubs shoot single action revolvers similar to what was common on the frontier. Everyone can shoot faster and more accurately with both hands to the extent that the competition is sometimes divided in "conventional style" (one-handed) and "modern style" (two-handed). Bringing your other hand into play is just a natural action to steady the gun . . . with all the practicing the gun lovers of the Old West did, they must have discovered this. But let's remember that most gunmen were *horsemen.* Many were cavalry soldiers or cowboys, or both, so one-handed shooting was their way—the reins in one hand, the pistol in the other. Probably more shots were fired from horseback than on foot. When on foot you were rarely standing still . . . either running toward or away from your adversary. It's hard to shoot with both hands when running. If on foot you can stand edgewise to your opponent; also in combat you're often hiding behind something—a rock, tree, building, or your dead horse. You expose a lot less of yourself with a one-handed shot. It sure is a lot of fun to read, write, and talk about gunfights today knowing we won't have to face the situation ourselves. But if we did? I'd go for some type of diplomatic settlement!"

Doc's Grave

Bill Mathers, of Littleton, Colorado, frequently visits Glenwood Springs, Colorado, the site of Doc Holliday's grave. He writes with an interesting question about that gravesite.

Doc's headstone reads "He Died in Bed," while a footstone reads "This Memorial Dedicated to Doc Holliday Who is Buried Someplace in this Cemetery." Mr. Mathers heard that during Jimmy Carter's presidency people in Valdosta, Georgia, where Doc hailed from, wanted Doc's remains reburied there to compete with Plains, Georgia, (the former president's hometown) for tourist dollars. Glenwood Springs residents didn't like the idea and came up with the story that no one knew exactly where in the cemetery Doc was buried. Mr. Mathers wants to know if the story is true.

Personally I believe Doc is buried somewhere in the Glenwood Springs cemetery, but just exactly where no one can say. The headstone was placed there some years after his death. For more details on Doc's burial place, see "Doc Holliday's Missing Grave," by J.R. Kirkpatrick, in the October 1990 issue of TRUE WEST.

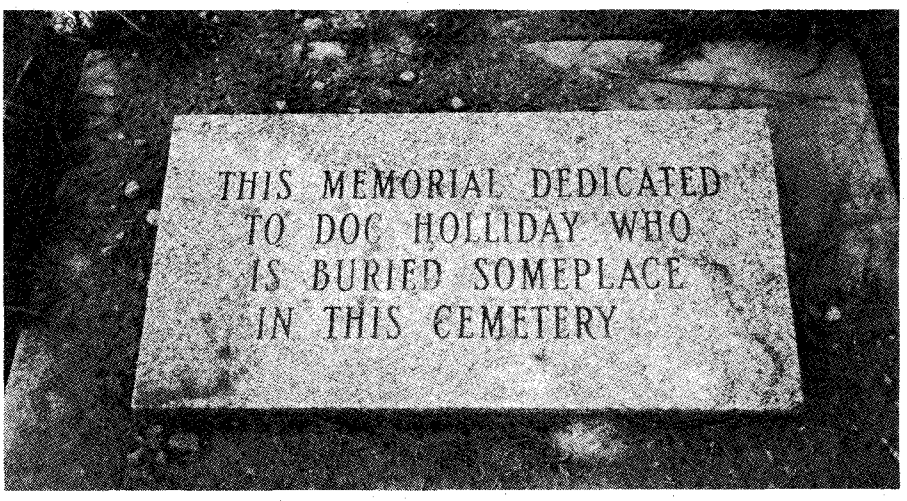
Alamo Survivors

The fall of the Alamo is, of course, one of the milestone events in Texas history. Don Cole, Lewisville, Texas, would like to know what happened to William Barret Travis's son and slave, to Susanna Dickinson and her daughter, Angelina, and to Jim Bowie's slave.

Travis married Rosanna Cato in Alabama on October 26, 1828. The marriage was not successful, and in 1831 Travis left alone for Texas. In the fall of 1835, Rosanna, still married to Travis, took their son, Charles Edward, born August 1, 1829, and a daughter, Susan Isabella, whom Travis had never seen, to Texas to attempt a reconciliation. She failed and the couple divorced in 1835.

Charles Edward lived in New Orleans with his mother and stepfather, Dr. Cloud died in 1848. In 1850 Charles Edward moved to Brenham, Texas, with ward moved to Brenham, Texas, with his sister, who was by then Mrs. John Grissett.

Charles Edward was an attorney and captain of a Texas Ranger group stationed at Fort Clark in 1854. On March



Bill Mathers Photo

This marker is at the foot of the Glenwood Springs cemetery plot designated as Doc Holliday's.

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3, 1855, he was appointed captain of the Second United States Cavalry under General Albert Sidney Johnston. He died in Washington County in 1860. I do not know about the daughter's fate.

Travis had a slave, Joe, whom Mexican general Santa Anna spared after the fall of the Alamo because he considered him a noncombatant. Also, slavery was illegal in Mexico, and Santa Anna spitefully used Joe to spread the word of the Mexican victory to the rest of Texas.

Joe was sent with survivor Susanna Dickinson to notify Sam Houston of the defeat. He also testified before the Texas cabinet. Ironically he later had to flee Texas and returned to the Travis home in Alabama.

Jim Bowie reportedly had a slave named Ben, but that man may actually have been Juan Almonte's black cook who was sent out as an escort for Susanna Dickinson.

Susanna Dickinson, born in 1814 or 1815; her husband, Almeron; and daughter, Angelina, born December 14, 1834, were all in the Alamo when the siege began. Almeron died in the battle. Considering them noncombatants, Santa Anna sent Susanna and her daughter away to notify Sam Houston.

Susanna married four more times. She married John Williams November 27, 1837; they divorced March 24, 1838. She married Francis P. Herring December 20, 1838; he died in 1843. Susanna married Peter Bellows on December 15, 1847; they divorced in 1857; and she married Joseph W. Hannig in 1857. They lived in Lockhart, Texas, until moving to Austin, where they found success in business and real estate. She died in Austin October 7, 1883.

In 1851, Angelina married John Maynard Griffith. The couple had three children but were ultimately divorced. She then married Oscar Holmes in 1864. She later may have married a man named Jim Britton in Galveston, where she died in 1869 at the age of thirty-five. For a complete account of Susanna Dickinson's life see "From Eyewitness to Obscurity," by Don Blevins, in the April 1993 TRUE WEST.

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions. Due to the volume of mail, we cannot forward correspondence to people whose questions appear in "Answer Man."

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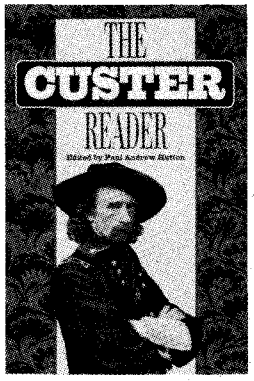

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The impulse to rob a train came to him while he stood on the freezing, wind-swept platform of the Green River station watching the well-dressed passengers sitting in the club car of a train standing in the station.

THE LAST COWBOY BANDIT

By MURRAY L. CARROLL

The night of February 9, 1916, was snowy and bitter cold at the Union Pacific Railroad division point of Green River, Wyoming. Because of blizzards in Idaho, Utah, and western Wyoming, trains were arriving there hours late. The station platform was deserted and train crews and passengers waiting for trains took refuge in the depot of the yardmaster's office.

About 9:30 p.m. the Portland Rose, bound from the northwest to Chicago, pulled into the station. Miss Rhoda Marks of Seattle stepped out on the observation car platform to look at the snow. She stayed only a moment in the biting, sub-zero cold. Stepping back inside, she took a seat in the parlor section of the car. From the voices, she knew that several men were in the forward smoking compartment of the car, but she was alone in the parlor section.

Shortly after the train pulled out of

Bill Carlisle on entering the Wyoming state penitentiary, 1916.

Illustration by L.A. SMITH

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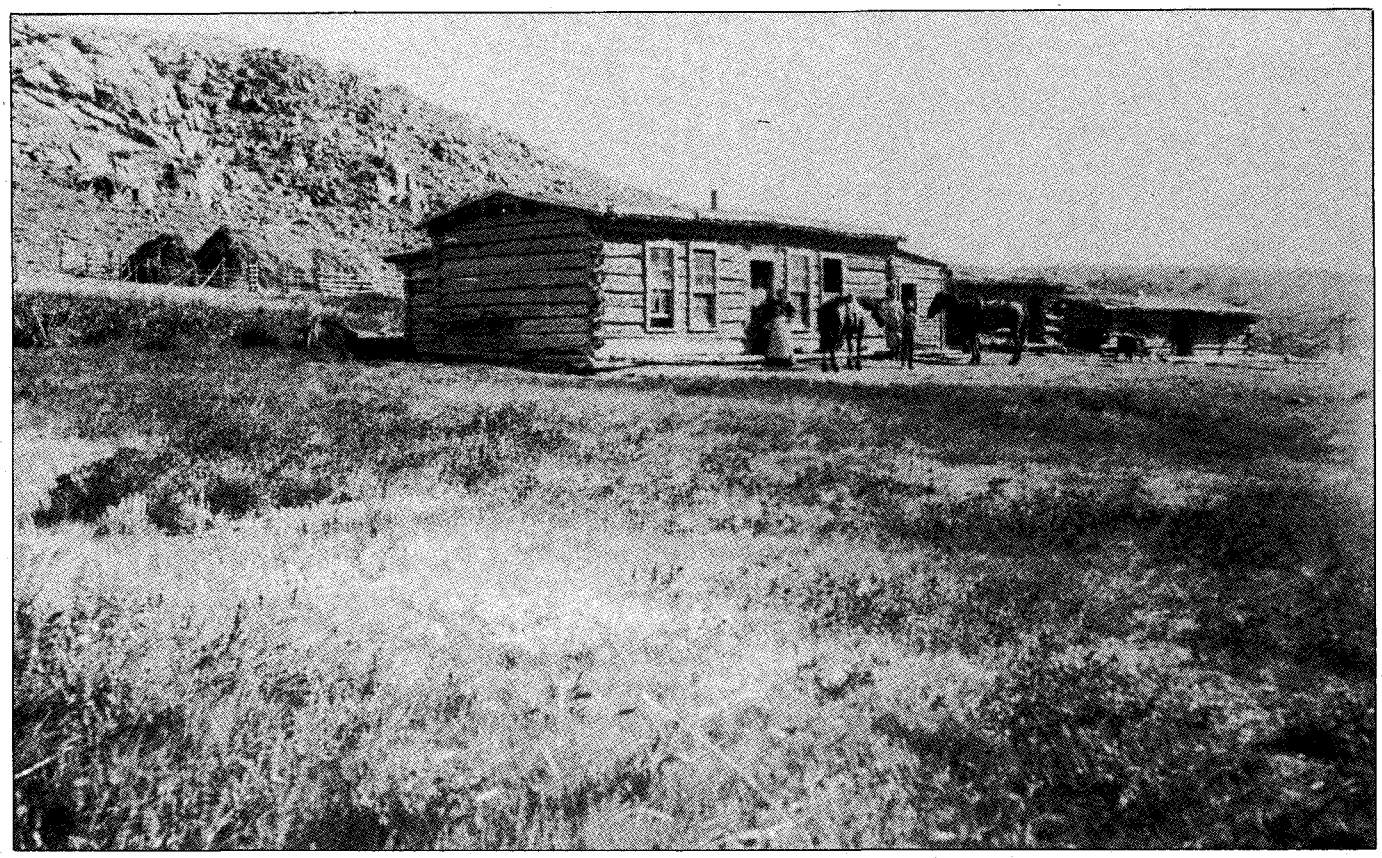

Wyoming State Museum

The Garrett Ranch in Albany County, where Carlisle worked before he got in trouble and where he found help while hiding out.

the Green River station, the door to the platform opened with a blast of cold air and a man entered. Miss Marks glanced up and was stunned to see he had a white silk handkerchief across his face and was pointing a gun at her. He said, "sit where you are and nothing will happen to you." For some reason she grabbed for the gun, but the gunman stepped back and warned her again to sit still. He moved past her toward the front of the car.

With his gun, the man poked the porter sleeping in the barber chair and ordered him into the aisle. Just then the rear brakeman stepped out of the smoking compartment. The bandit ordered both men into the smoking compartment and told the five or six men there to raise their hands. The brakeman told the passengers that it was just a joke, but the bandit repeated the command and fired a round past the brakeman's ear into the roof of the car to emphasize his point. All hands went up and the robber had the porter use his cap to collect money from the men.

The bandit then moved into the two Pullman sleeping cars ahead of the parlor car. He ordered the Pullman porter to open the berths of just the male passengers and collect their money. While he was robbing passengers in the second car, J.J. Fitzgerald, the conductor, and E.P. Taylor, the front-end brakeman, came through the door. The man ordered them to put up their hands. The third time he ordered them to "get them hands up damn quick," he fired a shot past Fitzgerald's head into the upper berth behind him.

The conductor watched for a chance to get away. When the bandit was momentarily distracted, he slipped around the corner of the smoking compartment and escaped to the next car where he pulled the emergency cord to stop the train. The bandit stepped out to the vestibule between the sleeping cars, climbed to the top of the car, and ran forward to the baggage car. He dropped into the blind space between the baggage car and the mail car, and when the train came to a full stop, he dropped off and hid behind the right-of-way fence. The train crew searched along the track for about ten minutes, then took the train into Rock Springs, about three miles away.

The Portland Rose's arrival in Rock Springs stirred up a hornet's nest. The Union Pacific had not suffered a robbery in sixteen years, and railroad officials had assumed train robbery was part of the frontier past. Division Superintendent F.H. Hammill in Cheyenne and Bill Jeffers, the general manager in Omaha, were immediately alerted. The railroad quickly posted a reward. The initial offer was $500, then it went to $1,000. Finally it was raised to $1,500, dead or alive.

Matt McCourt, sheriff of Sweetwater County, swore in posses of deputies in both Green River and Rock Springs. W.G. McClements, chief special agent for the Union Pacific, and John C. Gale, chief special agent for the Wyoming division, started from Cheyenne with Charley Irwin and other railroad special agents in an extra train. They picked up still more special agents in Laramie and Rawlins.

Meanwhile, the bandit carefully worked his way through the hills back to Green River. After a couple of initial scares, he painstakingly avoided the highway, now crowded with automobiles full of possemen, paralleling the railroad between Green River and Rock Springs. At the first opportunity he took stock of his loot from the robbery, a grand total of $52.35 and an Elgin watch belonging to W.G. Carmenetta of Aberdeen, Washington.

The man who risked being hanged under the provisions of a 1910 Wyoming

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Below: Left to right, W.G. McClements, chief special agent, Union Pacific Railroad; Matt McCourt, sheriff of Sweetwater County; Bill Carlisle; and Orrin Babbitt, sheriff of Laramie County, after Carlisle's capture in 1916. Right: Daniel C. Buntin was a major loser in Carlisle's second robbery.

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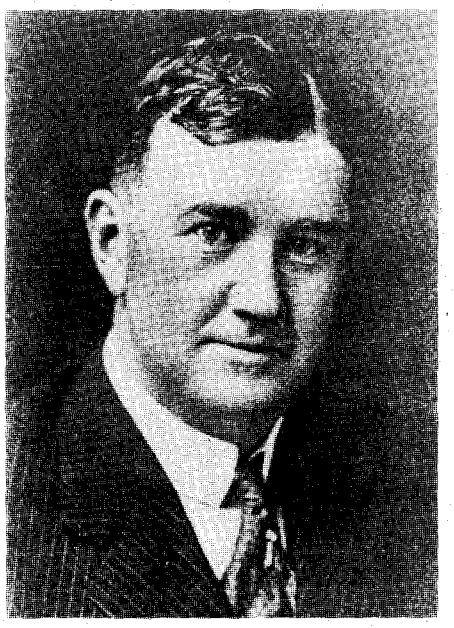

Tennessee State Historical Society

law making train robbery a capital offense was twenty-six-year-old Bill Carlisle. Carlisle, born near York, Pennsylvania, was the youngest of five children of a poverty-stricken family. His father was a disabled Civil War veteran old enough to be his grandfather. His mother died before he was a year old. His father was unable to care for him and Carlisle was shuttled between public orphanages and relatives.

At the age of ten, Carlisle returned to live with his father. He augmented the family income, and kept his home warm, by stealing coal from a nearby rail yard. He also became adept at hooking rides on freight trains, often going as far west as Chicago. Those activities gave him a healthy respect for, and an intense dislike for, railroad detectives.

At sixteen, Carlisle ran away from home. He was involved in a few minor scrapes with the law before he found himself in Montana, where he decided he wanted to be a cowboy. A small-time outlaw known only as "Missouri" took him under his wing and introduced him to the Skelton brothers, Lon and Harve, who owned a small ranch near the Canadian border. They had a rustling operation, stealing horses on the Canadian side of the border and selling them in the United States, and stealing horses in the United States and selling them in Canada. Carlisle and Missouri sometimes worked as decoys, drawing Mounties and other officers away from the border crossing point. At other times they helped move the stock.

Lon Skelton and Carlisle developed a strong dislike for each other. A party of Mounties intercepted the rustlers while making a border crossing, and in the rush to escape, Carlisle's horse got away from him. He looked to Lon to pull him up behind him, but instead Lon shot at him, grazing his skull. A Mountie, James Keeson, rescued Carlisle and, instead of arresting him, took him back across the border where Keeson's sister nursed him back to health.

Carlisle was a restless drifter. For the next few years he led a gypsy's life, working as a cowboy, horse breaker, railroad brakeman or fireman, hard rock miner, or gambler. He wandered through the West from Montana to Mexico, and the winter of 1916 found him broke and out of work in Denver. Carlisle sought work in Cheyenne, Wyoming, but had no luck there. He worked his way west to Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs, and finally Green River; he got the same answer everywhere—the railroad was laying off men, not hiring them.

The idea of robbing a train came to him while he stood on the freezing, windswept platform of the Green River station watching the well-dressed passengers sitting in the club car of a train standing in the station. He missed the train, but an hour later the Portland Rose arrived. He caught it at the edge of the yards.

Robbing the train was only an impulse, not a plan. In his coat pocket Carlisle had a toy glass gun, a .32 caliber revolver for which he had fourteen cartridges, and a white silk bandanna. He had not planned exactly how he would carry out the robbery, or how he would make his escape. He had not even thought about the snow on the ground or that he would have a hard time covering his trail. His successful escape was due more to pure luck than to planning.

A peculiar incident helped romanticize Carlisle's train robbery. When he jumped off the train, Carlisle dropped the glass gun out of his pocket, and it broke. A railroad detective found the pieces beside the track. Herders at the Barrett sheep camp, where Carlisle had stayed before the robbery, told authorities that he showed them the glass gun, and, as far as they knew, it was the only weapon he had. In spite of the two shots Carlisle fired during the robbery, and much to the railroad's consternation, a legend grew that Carlisle had robbed the train with a glass gun.

Carlisle walked into Green River the evening after the robbery. He ate dinner at a Chinese restaurant, had a shave in a barbershop, and caught a train back to Laramie, right under the noses of the lawmen who were hunting him. Carlisle worked his way into the isolated Laramie Peak area, and for two months he moved from ranch to ranch, cutting wood, breaking horses, and doing odd jobs.

Ranchers liked Carlisle and he worked hard, but the area was poor and his pay was low. At the end of eight weeks he had little to show for his work. Carlisle thought that the large reward on his head made his arrest inevitable, so he decided to rob another train, take the loot, and head for Alaska.

On April 3 he was back in Cheyenne. The next night he climbed on the observation car of the westbound Overland Limited as it pulled out of the Cheyenne yards.

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Using the same plan as before, Carlisle pulled a white silk bandanna over his face, opened the door from the observation platform, and told the passengers to get their hands up. He got the same reaction as he did in the first robbery—no one moved. The third time, the hard edge in his voice got action. Unobserved by Carlisle, the rear brakeman came into the car, saw what was happening, and slipped back out, locking the door behind him. He found the conductor and told him that the train was being robbed. The conductor dropped a note off as the train passed a signal tower at Borie, and the signalman flashed a message to Cheyenne, "the Overland Limited has a bandit aboard."

Special agent McClements immediately put into effect an emergency plan he had developed. Posses were called up and sworn in, the road between Cheyenne and Laramie quickly was placed under surveillance, and the police, sheriff's office, and special agents in Laramie were alerted. In addition, all roads into Cheyenne were blockaded.

On the train, Carlisle ordered the porter to collect the money of all the male passengers on the observation car. As in the first robbery, he did not take any jewelry except a watch and chain from Walter G. Volk of San Francisco. He gave Carmenetta's watch, stolen in the Portland Rose robbery, to the porter and told him, "Give this to the railroad superintendent with my compliments." He then told his victims that he was leaving and would shoot anyone who followed him or tried to stop him.

Daniel C. Buntin, a wealthy Nashville banker, attorney, and partner in a land development company in Laramie, was a major contributor to Carlisle during the robbery. He winked at Carlisle and told him, "Go ahead, mister, I like your nerve. If anyone tries to follow you, I'll stop them." Carlisle went out on the platform, dropped off the train, and made his getaway.

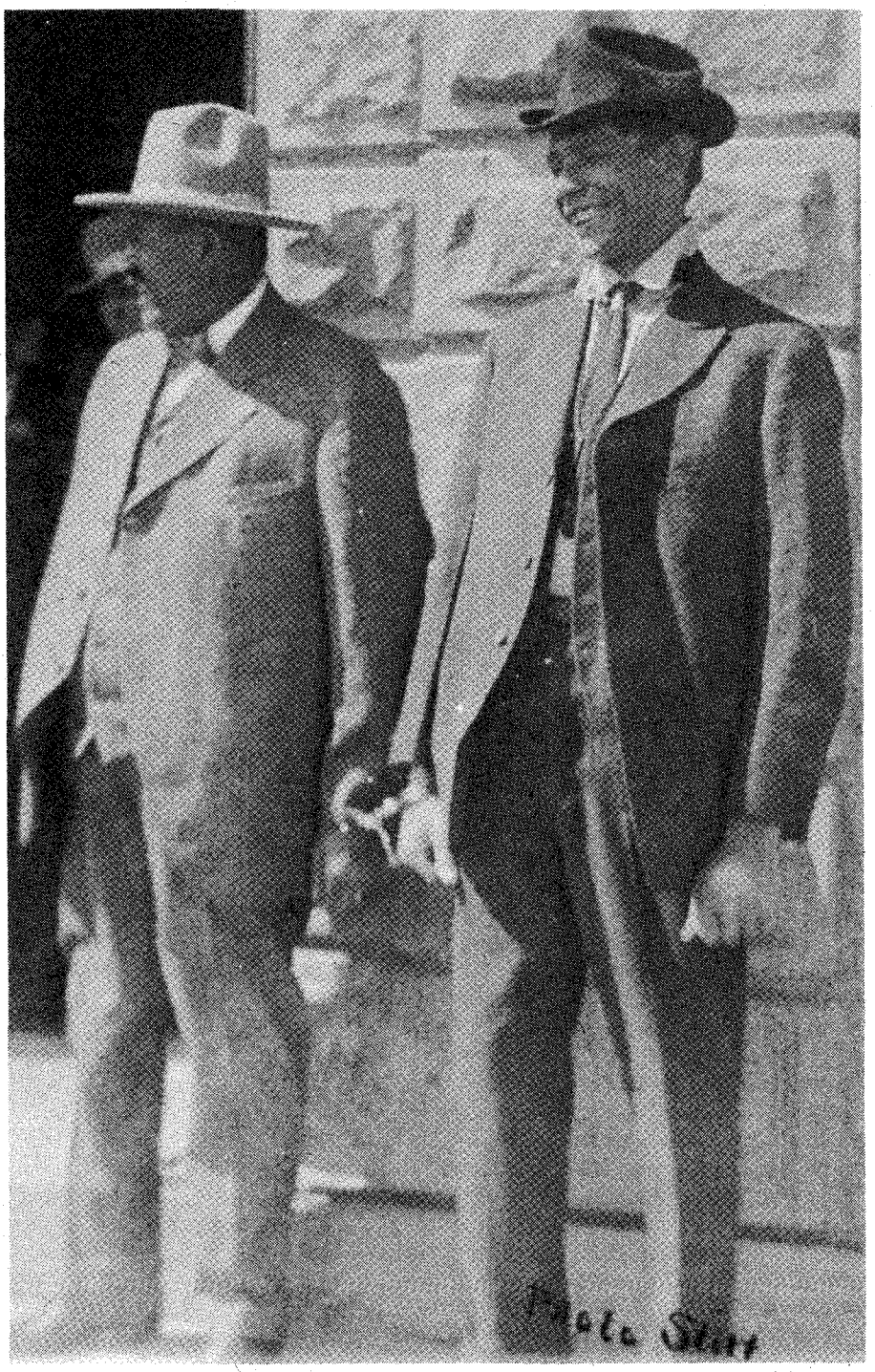
Jeffers, the general manager, went to Cheyenne by special train to take charge of the manhunt personally. The reward for Carlisle was increased to $6,500, dead or alive, and so many searchers took the field that they got in each other's way. Men fitting Carlisle's general description and unable to account for themselves were being held in jails all over Wyoming and Colorado.

Carlisle's take from the second robbery was a little better—$506.07. He avoided towns and roads and walked through the hills back to the familiar Laramie Peak country. Five days after the robbery, Carlisle was in Douglas. He had walked over 150 miles, ridden twenty miles in a car, gone twenty more by stage, and eaten every meal at ranches along the way. In Douglas he got into a poker game, broke it, and doubled his money.

In Casper, Carlisle read for the first time about the number of men being held in jails for the robbery. To prove their innocence, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Denver Post*. It read "To prove that this letter is the real thing, I am enclosing a watch-chain which I took from the last hold-up in Cheyenne—this chain can be easily identified.

"To convince the officers that they have the wrong men in jail, I will hold up a train somewhere west of Laramie, Wyoming. (Signed) The White Masked Bandit."

Carlisle mailed the letter in Casper, then caught the train for Cheyenne. From there he went to Denver. The



Wyoming State Museum

Carbon County Sheriff Rubie Revera (left) did not capture Bill Carlisle, but he posed handcuffed to him on the steps of the Carbon County jail in Rawlins.

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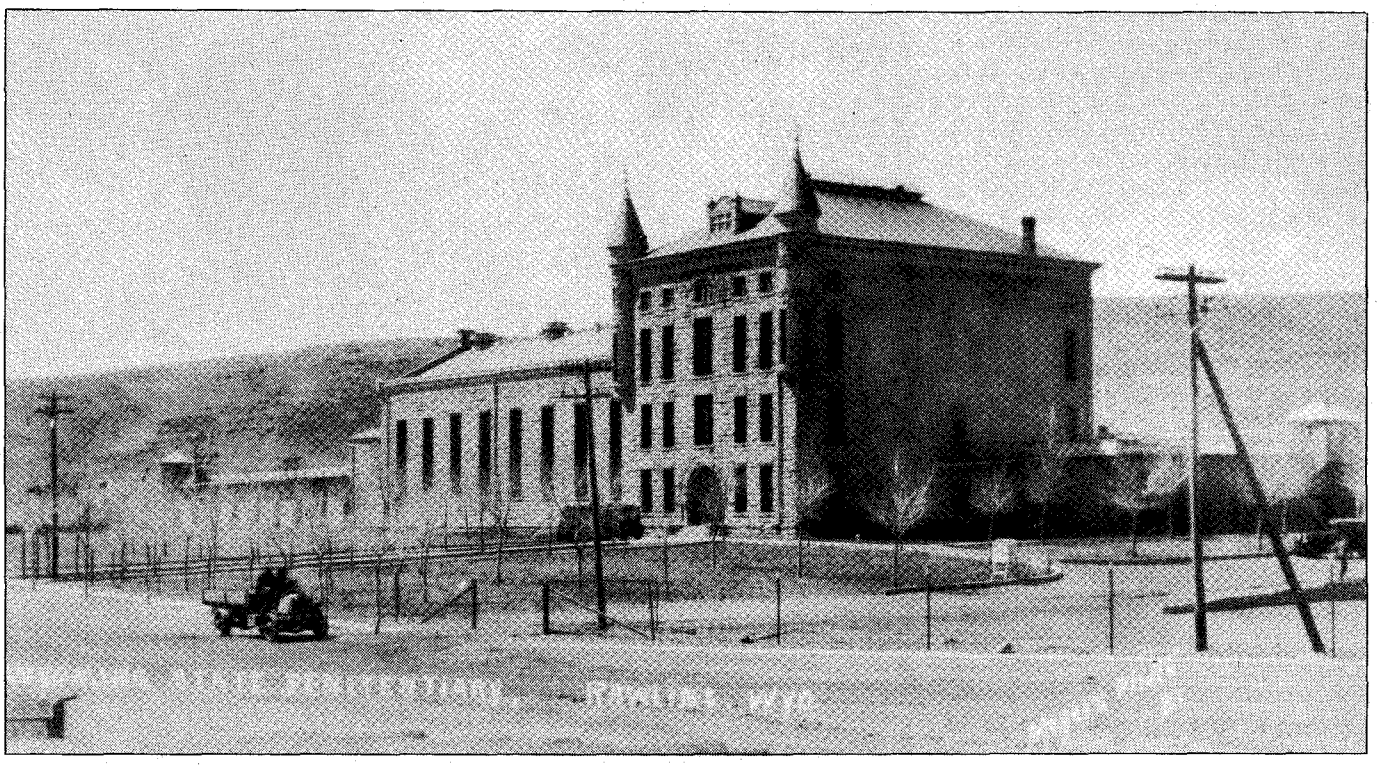

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The Wyoming state penitentiary in Rawlins, where Bill Carlisle was imprisoned nearly twenty years.

morning of April 21 he caught the interurban from Denver to Greeley, Colorado. At Greeley, be bought a ticket and Pullman space on the Pacific Limited from Greeley to Rawlins. On that train he could rob the passengers before they retired and escape under the cover of darkness.

Sure that the railroad would have a special agent or agents on the train, Carlisle toured the Pullman cars to search for anyone who looked likely. While having dinner in the dining car, he noticed one man with a suspicious bulge under his right arm. Later, in the observation car, a talkative brakeman confirmed Carlisle's suspicions.

After the train left Hanna, Carlisle ran into the special agent, thirty-one-year-old Fred Dudley, in the vestibule between the observation car and the first Pullman. Carlisle had not had time to put on his white bandanna, but he wanted Dudley disarmed and under his control, so he stuck his gun into Dudley's stomach and said, "Hands up." Dudley told him to go to hell. Carlisle drew his second gun and said, "I am the white masked bandit and up with them." According to Dudley, the only thing that kept him from raising his hands higher was the roof of the car.

Carlisle took both of Dudley's guns and his wallet. Then he handed him a watch and said, "Here is a present for you. I always keep my word. Here is a watch that came off of number one, it goes with the chain I sent to the *Denver Post.*" Next he shook down the brakeman and ordered him to start collecting the male passengers' money. The conductor came into the car and Carlisle told him to get his hands up, and at the same time fired a shot over his head. Four chorus girls and their manager were sitting on the observation platform, and at the shot, the manager fell off his chair and the girls turned around and stuck up their hands. Carlisle told the brakeman to step to the door and tell them to put down their hands, then asked Dudley, "How would you like to have a picture of those four with their hands up like that?"

Carlisle moved to the smoking comparment with the brakeman, conductor, and Dudley in front of him. In the smoking compartment he ordered the porter to take up the collection. With Dudley as his shield, he robbed the passengers in the smoking compartments of the first two Pullman cars.

Carlisle had Dudley open the vestibule door and, as the train slowed for the Edson Tunnel, he jumped, just missing the abutment at the entrance to the tunnel. Dudley was watching to see where the outlaw landed and reported that all he could see was dust as Carlisle hit the ground and bounced.

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When Carlisle landed he twisted his right ankle, scratched and bruised his face, got his eyes full of dirt and cinders, and lost one of his guns and one of Dudley's. Carlisle's ankle was twisted so badly he had to take off his shoe; to make walking easier, he took off his left shoe as well. Sharp rocks and prickly pear cactus tore up the soles of his feet, adding to his misery.

Finally Carlisle reached the Platte River. He washed the dirt and cinders out of his cuts and scratches and soaked his feet. He hid in the brush and rested until sunrise.

Daylight revealed that the area was

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swarming with possemen. With his ankle too painful to walk and his eye swollen shut, he knew he could not get away—his luck had run out. George Baccus, a posseman from Laramie, approached his hiding place on horseback. Carlisle stood up and told Baccus he wanted to surrender. Baccus fired a shot over his head and told him to get his hands up. A second posseman, Charles Harnden, also from Laramie, came up from the rear and would have shot Carlisle in the back had Baccus not stopped him.

The posse took Carlisle back to Edson, where Jeffers' private car and special train were sitting on a siding. Dudley identified Carlisle, whom Jeffers questioned. Carlisle was jailed in Rawlins.

Sheriff Rubie Rivera of Carbon County did not have a part in Carlisle's capture, but he made political capital out of it. He posed for press photographers on the steps of the Carbon County jail handcuffed to Carlisle. Copies of the photos were for sale the next day all over Wyoming for fifty cents each.

Carlisle was later moved to Cheyenne for a trial, which was quick. Carlisle was charged April 24, 1916; his trial opened on May 9; on May 10, jury foreman Joseph H. Draper read a verdict of "guilty" and a sentence of life imprisonment in the state penitentiary at Rawlins.

The *Denver Post* gave Carlisle sympathetic coverage from the beginning of his train-robbing career. The newspaper's headline at the time of his capture read, "White-masked bandit surrenders when murder is his last chance."

Carlisle made every effort to conform with penitentiary rules. He showed skill in his work in the prison's shirt factory, first making shirts, then the wooden shipping crates used to send them to a contractor in Chicago. Carlisle quickly became shipping clerk. He attended classes in the prison school and was a member of the prison literary society. During a prisoner strike in the spring of 1919, he sided with prison officials and helped get other convicts to return to work.

In October 1919, Governor Robert D. Carey rewarded Carlisle's efforts in a peculiar way by commuting Carlisle's sentence to twenty-five to fifty years. While a prisoner sentenced to life would serve no more than fifteen years with good time, a twenty-five to fifty-year sentence carried with it a minimum of twenty years. Carey's statement to the *Cheyenne Tribune* made it clear he knew exactly what he was doing. He said, "Although I have commuted Carlisle's sentence, I have done so in a way that it is doubtful if it will do him any good." With that development, Carlisle decided that he had enjoyed enough of the state of Wyoming's hospitality.

Fred G. Dudley, Jr., Photo

Fred G. Dudley, a Union Pacific special agent assigned to catch Carlisle.

The penitentiary shirt factory made shipments every day except Sunday. Saturdays the shirt factory shut down at noon and the inmates attended a show. The Saturday shipment was always made before the factory closed. Carlisle convinced the prison administration that it would be good business for him to go back Saturday afternoons, pack the boxes, prepare the shipping documents, and leave everything on the loading dock for the penitentiary truck driver to pick up.

For two months after learning of his new sentence, Carlisle left Saturday shipments on the dock for the driver. With that routine established, he built a special crate with a layer of shirts on the bottom and a layer on top, and space for himself in the middle. The top was secured with cleats fastened from inside.

The shipment for Saturday, November 15, was particularly large and took two trips by the truck crew. Carlisle arranged his crate as part of the second

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load. When he heard the truck through the gate after delivering the first load, he crawled into his crate and waited. Three or four trucks were lined up at the freight dock loading oil well supplies, so the shirt boxes were left on the platform for the freight handlers to move into the depot. The handlers moved the boxes into the freight house just before the five o'clock quitting-time whistle blew. Carlisle waited until he was sure everyone had gone, left his box, and slipped out of the freight depot door.

Authorities missed Carlisle at the five o'clock count, and at first guards thought he was still in the shirt factory. A search of the factory and cell block turned up no trace of him and gave no indication of how he escaped. About seven o'clock, as a last resort, Deputy Warden Pickett went to the depot. He found the open door and the ingenious crate, solving the mystery of how Carlisle left the prison. The only clue to his whereabouts was a map of Montana in the box.

Carlisle walked to Creston, a Union Pacific siding west of Rawlins. Still in prison garb, he went into a section house, slept with the section crew, and had breakfast with them the next morning. From there he went to a PH Ranch sheep wagon. He dressed in the sheepherder's clothes, leaving his prison uniform, and took a .25-35 rifle and ammunition. Both the camp tender and the herder were at the camp. They recognized him, but fed him and let him have the clothing and the rifle.

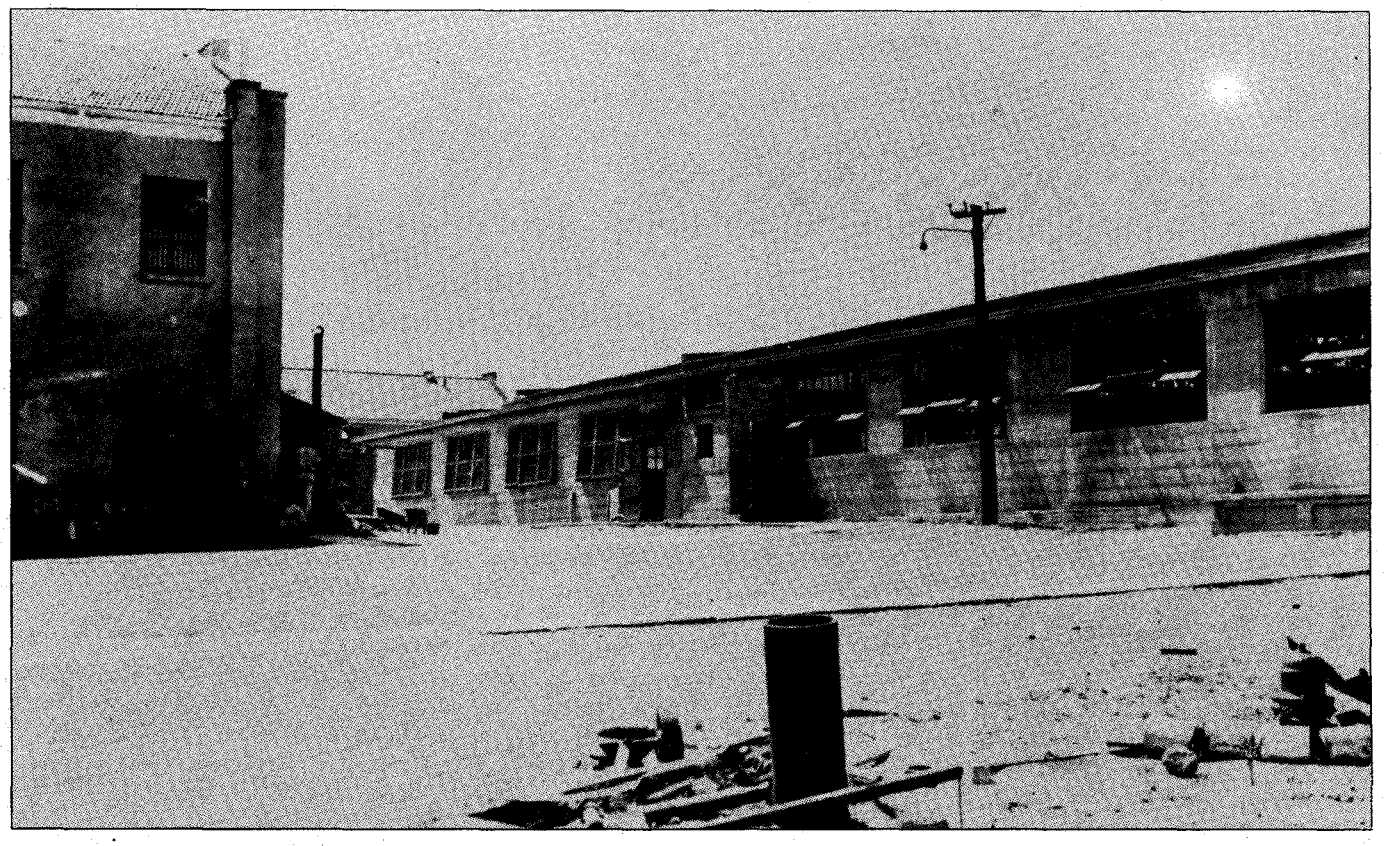
When Carlisle went back to the railroad, he saw that the westbound trains were being checked, so he caught a freight back to Rawlins. With his newly acquired rifle, he passed himself off as a guard. In his role of guard he rode the engine of a freight to Laramie. As he was leaving the cab of the engine in Laramie, the engineer said, "So long Bill, and good luck."

Warden William C. Brine told the press that Carlisle did not have any money when he left the prison. Carlisle had, however, hidden enough to buy a meal, rent a cot in the Johnson Hotel, and buy a .32 caliber revolver and shells. Carlisle noted that eastbound trains out of Laramie were being checked, so he caught a westbound freight to Hanna, then doubled back east to Rock River. Then he targeted a westbound passenger train. Rock River had long snow sheds west of the depot. Instead of his usual approach through the observation car, he climbed between the two passenger coaches stopped in the darkness of the shed.

As the train pulled out, he broke a vestibule window and crawled in. A passenger in the vestibule, thinking Carlisle was a fellow passenger who got caught on the car stairs after the doors were shut, helped him through the window. To his surprise, the good samaritan was greeted with a pistol and a snarled, "Damn you, get up your hands and get out of my way."

That time Carlisle was on the wrong end of the train. He was in a tourist car and many of the passengers were servicemen. He fired a shot into the roof and told the passengers to get their hands up—he did not have to repeat the order. He told the passengers that he was not robbing soldiers, sailors, women, children, or old men, but he wanted everything everyone else had. He took the collection himself.

Carlisle went into the vestibule to go to the next car and could tell that the passengers had been warned, so he turned out the vestibule light and waited until the train slowed for Medicine Bow. As he got ready to jump, two young men opened the vestibule door. The first had a gun in his hand, and Carlisle hit the gun with his hand;



Wyoming State Museum

The Wyoming state penitentiary shirt factory, where Carlisle shipped himself out of prison.

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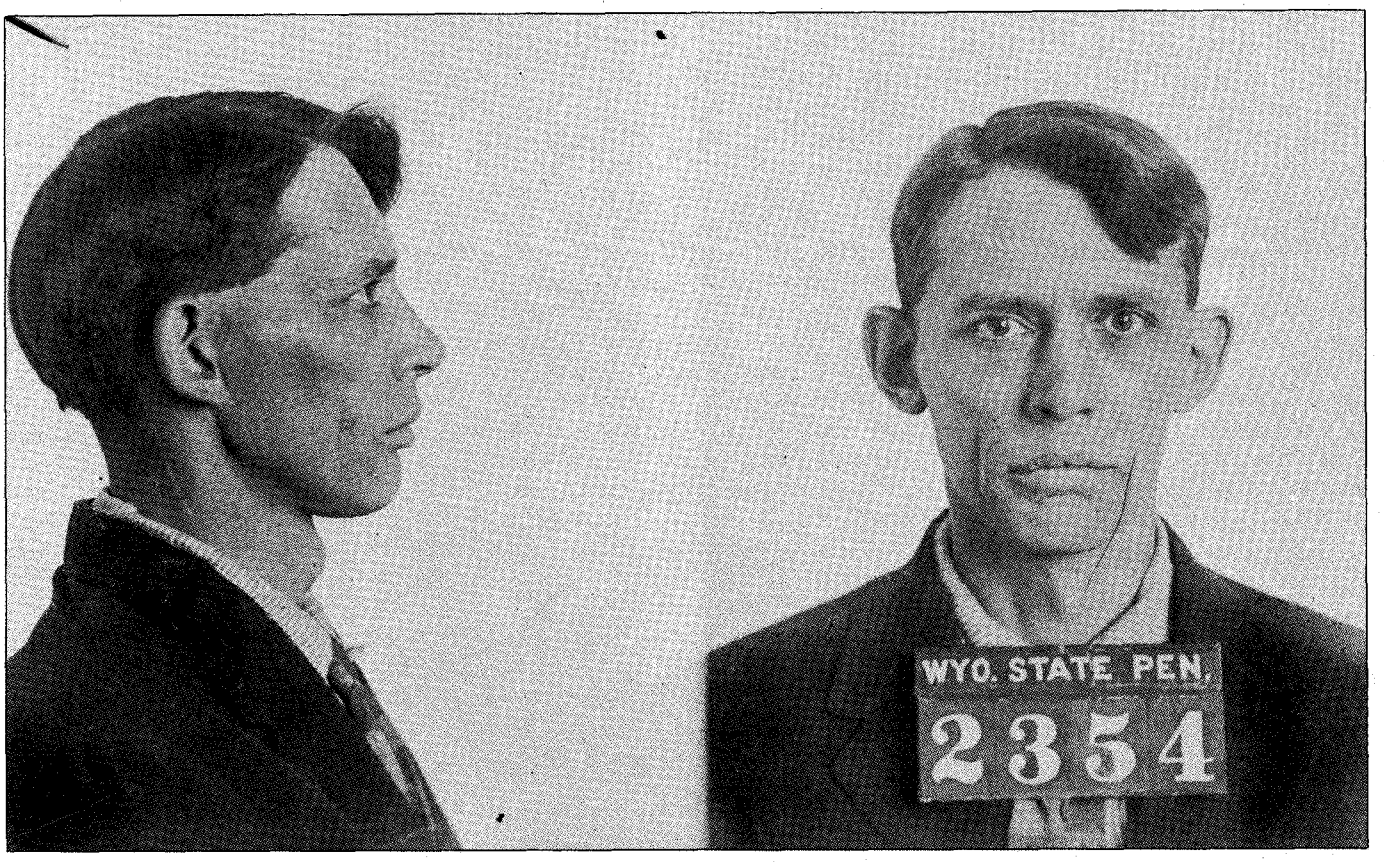

Wyoming State Museum

Bill Carlisle's prison photograph taken after his escape and return to prison in 1919.

the gun discharged. The bullet entered Carlisle's right hand between the index and second fingers, smashed the bones in his hand, and lodged in his wrist. As he left the train, a fusillade of bullets from railroad special agents and armed passengers erupted.

Special trains loaded with posses and horses left Cheyenne, Laramie, and Green River for Medicine Bow. At Wamsutter, the train from Green River picked up a posse that had been searching for Carlisle in that area before the robbery. The same train picked up posses at Rawlins and Hanna as well. A troop of United States cavalry from Fort D.A. Russell, near Cheyenne, was sent to Medicine Bow to aid in the search.

Carlisle originally planned to go to Denver, then on to Canada. Because of his wound and the intensity of the search, he was forced to change his plans. On foot and in the bitter cold, Carlisle headed back to the familiar Laramie Peak country where he knew he would be among friends.

He moved from ranch to ranch, fed and sheltered by the ranchers whom he knew and who sympathized with him. They kept him abreast of the posses' locations and warned him of people in the area who might give him away. He succeeded in eluding capture until December 2.

On December 1 he stopped at the ranch of Mrs. H.A. Braae, a widow. It was dinner time and she invited him to stay and eat. Mrs. Braae noticed the condition of his hand and offered to dress it before they ate dinner. At that, Carlisle told her who he was. Before they had a chance to eat, the Braae children saw a five-man posse on horseback approaching the house. So the family would not be in danger, Carlisle left by a back door and scrambled up a hill into the woods.

The posse consisted of Sheriff Alonzo Roach of Platte County, Union Pacific special agents McClements, Gale, and Charlie Irwin, and a rancher named Jesse Morsch. Roach and McClements went part way up the hill but decided it was too dangerous and chose to pick up the trail the next day. They criticized the Braaes for not holding Carlisle. The next morning the Braaes followed Carlisle's tracks. Mrs. Braae said, "How easily he could have killed all five of them and made good his escape on one of their horses, if he had been the desperate criminal he has been painted."

Carlisle spent the night in an empty ranch house. As he moved through the rugged hills the next morning, he spotted a cabin with smoke coming out of the chimney. The temperature was forty-five degrees below zero, and Carlisle was cold, hungry, and feverish from his wound. Calculating that he had about two hours on the posse, he decided to go to the cabin. If he could warm up and get a hot meal and enough food to last a week, he thought he might have a chance to lose the posse in the hills.

The cabin, about a mile north of Esterbrook, belonged to Ed Williams, a prospector. The driver of the motor stage between Esterbrook and Douglas saw Carlisle's tracks where he had crossed the road. When the driver met the posse, he told them about the tracks. Roach figured that Williams' cabin was the only place the tracks could lead. Roach, McClements, Gale, Irwin, Morsch, a deputy and a driver took an automobile as close to the cabin as they could get, while the rest of the posse followed the tracks on horseback.

The posse surrounded the cabin. Carlisle was in the bedroom and Williams was in the kitchen. Roach asked Williams if Carlisle were there and ordered him outside. He then ordered Carlisle out. Carlisle left his guns on the bed and stepped to the bedroom door with his hands up, his coat off, and his

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vest open. Because of his wound, he could not raise his right hand above the shoulder. Roach and McClements both yelled for him to get them higher, and at the same time Roach shot Carlisle through the right lung with a high-power rifle. McClements and Roach stepped into the cabin; one stepped on Carlisle's wounded right wrist while covering him with his rifle. The other stepped on his left wrist and stuck his rifle in the captive's ribs.

After some debate, they finallly bandaged Carlisle's chest wound, put him on a horse, and took him to the car. They drove him to a hospital in Douglas. The railroad special agents allowed the doctor to dress the chest wound, but would not allow him to remove the bullet from Carlisle's wrist.

The posse surrounded the cabin, Carlisle was in the bedroom and Williams was in the kitchen. Roach asked Williams if Carlisle were there and ordered him outside. He then ordered Carlisle out. Carlisle left his guns on the bed and stepped to the door with his hands up, his coat off, and his vest open.

According to a story released to newspapers, Carlisle was shot "when he made an attempt to elude his captors." The doctor noted from the position of the wound that Carlisle's hands were up when he was shot. No mention was made of the fact that Roach was a long way from his jurisdiction in Platte County. A week after his capture, Carlisle was removed from the hospital and placed in the Converse County jail.

On December 18 he was back in the penitentiary in Rawlins. Five days after he returned, an operation was performed on his now badly infected lung. The bullet was not removed from his wrist for five months; his lung did not heal for over a year.

Carlisle was not charged with the escape, nor with the last train robbery. The railroad officials overreached themselves. Early in 1920 they pressed the state to bring charges against all the ranchers who had sheltered Carlisle, especially the widow Braae and Frank Day, a rancher who fed him before he stopped at Braae's, neither of whom knew Carlisle nor had ever seen him before he appeared at their ranches. Papers nationwide picked up and published a letter of Mrs. Braae's, which the *Douglas Enterprise* had printed a week after Carlisle's capture. In the letter Mrs. Braae gave her account of Carlisle's stay at her home, and deplored the injustice of his sentence commutation. The railroad backed off and no charges were filed against Carlisle or those who helped him.

Practical jokers across the country apparently got the same idea while Carlisle was on the run. Police departments all over the United States received letters, telegrams, or postcards, ostensibly from Carlisle, saying that he was going to pay their respective cities a visit. He was reported as having been seen as far east as Erie, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo, New York, and had reportedly held up a man in Denver, robbed a department store and a doctor's office in Lovell, Wyoming, and a Burlington train north of Cheyenne—all within a few hours of each other. Besides those reports, Carlisle's ranch friends in the Laramie Peak area often gave posses false information, or refused to tell them anything at all.

Carlisle had one good and trusted friend on the prison staff. Shortly after Carlisle returned to prison, the Reverend Gerard Schellinger, a Catholic priest, was appointed prison chaplain. Chaplain Schellinger encouraged Carlisle to adjust to the rules and take advantage of the educational and vocational opportunities available in prison. He did everything in his power to shield Carlisle from the harsh treatment the warden meted out to him. He also commenced an intensive effort to get him a parole. He even offered to serve out Carlisle's term if he broke the stipulations of a parole.

Nearly all the life-termers who were in prison when Carlisle arrived, and many who were sentenced after him, were pardoned or paroled. Most did not serve more than fifteen years. Union Pacific officials continued blocking Carlisle's applications. In June 1932, acting governor Alonzo M. Clark restored the automatic state good time Carlisle lost with his 1919 escape. On December 30, 1932, in a controversial move just before the end of his term, Clark restored the earned good time Carlisle lost, making him eligible for release at the end of 1935.

Carlisle continued working as prison librarian, a job he had held for a number of years. He made horsehair belts, bridles, and ropes for sale in the prison craft shop, and operated a small printing press. He served the last eighteen months of his sentence as chief clerk at the Riverton prison honor farm, a minimum security facility used for minor offenders and as a pre-release facility for prisoners with good records. He was released on January 9, 1936. At that time, only two convicts had been in the prison longer than Carlisle.

The day before his release, Carlisle had two visitors, John C. Gale, now chief special agent for the Union Pacific, and A.S. Kenworthy, chief special agent for the Wyoming division. Gale told Carlisle they still had two warrants, one for the robbery of the train outside Cheyenne, and one for the first robbery outside Green River. They said their agents would be watching him, and if he stepped out of line, they would nail him with the charges. The Union Pacific did not forgive or forget the sting of Carlisle's public popularity.

Carlisle went into business in Kemmerer, Wyoming, where the Reverend Schellinger was a parish priest. After a hospital stay for a ruptured appendix and peritonitis, Carlisle married his nurse, Lillian Berquist. The Carlisles adopted a daughter, Karen, moved to Laramie, and bought a run-down tourist court on the east edge of town. In time they updated it, added a gas station, small convenience store, a gift shop, and a restaurant. The businesses were successful and both of the Carlisles played an active role in the community. In 1946 Carlisle published his memoirs, *Bill Carlisle, Lone Bandit*, now a western literature classic. Carlisle did not make any money on the book and was not satisfied with its editing. He always intended to rewrite it, but never did.

In 1947, Governor Lester C. Hunt granted Carlisle a full pardon, saying, "I have watched with keen interest and gratification the strides you have made in reassuming the responsibilities of citizenship."

Lillian died of cancer in 1960. Their daughter married and moved away. In 1962 the gypsy itch of his youth returned, and Carlisle sold his business and started traveling. In the spring of 1963, however, he was diagnosed as having cancer. After a long and painful illness, Carlisle died at the home of a niece in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, on June 19, 1964, truly the last of the cowboy bandits.

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An Unlikely Trio

Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill, and Texas Jack—Actors

William F. Cody was a noted plainsman, buffalo hunter, and army scout, but he earned his greatest fame as a showman. His legend grew from the moment he met author Ned Buntline in 1869. Buntline was certain that, with his flair for writing and Cody's reputation, they could make money.

In December 1869, the *New York Weekly* published Buntline's "Buffalo Bill, King of the Bordermen," and Buffalo Bill achieved nationwide fame.

By SANDRA K. SAGALA

When the story was dramatized, Buntline realized that if he could persuade Cody to play himself, they could profit from Easterners who would pay to see the great Buffalo Bill in person. Cody first wanted to discuss the proposition with a fellow scout named Texas Jack.

John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro, a native Virginian, got his name from working on Texas cattle ranches. He distinguished himself as a buffalo hunter, guide, and scout. He and Cody were friends when Cody proposed they go east and present the drama. Omohundro agreed.

The pair arrived in Chicago in December 1872 and four days later debuted in "The Scouts of the Prairie," a play which Buntline had written for them. Acting troupes in those days traveled city to city, giving nightly performances and frequent matinees. They changed the bill often to attract the widest audience, and troupes of actors performing more than one drama came to be known as "combinations."

The Cody-Buntline troupe traveled throughout eastern cities and consistently played to enthusiastic audiences. Critics roasted Buntline's story lines, but the live heroes were favorites. By June 1873, however, Cody and Omohundro were disillusioned with Buntline's management. Expressing disappointment with their meager share of the profits, they broke off the relationship.

Courtesy of Joseph G. Rosa

A photo of Wild Bill Hickok, Texas Jack Omohundro, and Buffalo Bill Cody, apparently taken in Syracuse, New York, where the men appeared March 6 and 7, 1874. Hickok looks bored and a week later he left the troupe.

The press noted that the scouts' celerity with firearms demonstrated a great deal of practice. A reviewer also noted "a slight incongruity in the piece, and that is the frequency with which the same tribe of Indians are wiped out, but the oftener they were shot down, the better the audiences liked it."

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Following a hunting trip out west, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack considered a second theatrical season. In the spring or summer of 1873 Cody invited another old friend, James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok, to join the cast.

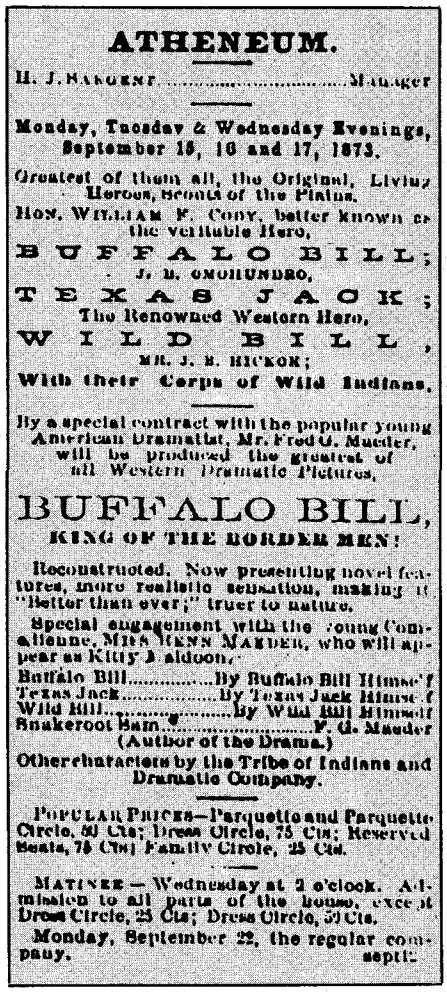
Hickok had established a formidable reputation as an army scout, plainsman, lawman, and gunfighter. Cody realized the impact that Wild Bill, who was already a legend, would have on eastern audiences. Hickok arranged to join Cody in New York City. Cody advertised the new combination in the *New York Clipper* on August 16, 1873, emphasizing the fact that Wild Bill was "pleased to avail himself of the opportunity to accompany his old comrade."

CODY WAS appearing at the Bowery Theatre when Wild Bill joined him on stage on September 4 and "gave an exhibition of rapid pistol-shooting and fancy shots" Texas Jack Omohundro rejoined the troupe the next day and entertained the audience with exhibitions of lasso throwing while what Cody billed as a "tribe of Indians newly arrived from the plains" performed war dances.

Monday, September 8, found the combination in their first official engagement in New Brunswick, New Jersey. They presented Fred G. Maeder's drama, "Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men," which Buntline's earlier efforts had inspired. Reviews from contemporary newspapers reveal the drama's "plot." In the play, Jim Daws, a horse thief and renegade, steals a child from Henry Carter, a friend of the scouts. Daws gets marked in a fight and vows revenge. Becoming a leader of the Comanches, he kills Carter and his wife and carries off two other daughters. Time and again through four acts, the girls or the scouts are in imminent danger (the play includes three or four burning-at-the-stake scenes.)

The press noted that the scouts' celerity with firearms demonstrated a great deal of practice. A reviewer also noted "a slight incongruity in the piece, and that is the frequency with which the same tribe of Indians are wiped out, but the oftener they were shot down, the better the audiences liked it." The "Indians" were an assortment of New York actors—or "supers"—made up to resemble real Indians. The *Clipper* promised on September 27 that the supers had as their mission not "death to their natural foes, as the dime novels would lead us to believe, but peace and good will to men who patronize them."

The combination appeared at Columbus, Ohio, September 15–17. Advertisements in *The Daily Dispatch* of September 12 described the show's "novel features" and its "more realistic sensations." Several days later the players reached Cincinnati where they stayed September 22–27.



ATHENEUM.

H. J. BANGERT ..... Manager

Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday Evenings, September 15, 16 and 17, 1873.

Greatest of them all, the Original, Living Heroes, Scouts of the Plains.

HON. WILLIAM F. CODY, better known as the veritable Hero,

BUFFALO BILL;

J. B. OMOHUNDRO,

TEXAS JACK;

The Renowned Western Hero,

WILD BILL,

MR. J. B. HICKOK;

With their Corps of Wild Indians.

By a special contract with the popular young American Dramatist, Mr. Fred G. Maeder, will be produced the greatest of all Western Dramatic Pictures,

BUFFALO BILL,

KING OF THE BORDER MEN!

Reconstructed. Now presenting novel features, more realistic sensation, making it "Better than ever;" truer to nature.

Special engagement with the young Comedienne, MISS KENNA MAEDER, who will appear as Kitty Baldoon.

Buffalo Bill.....By Buffalo Bill Himself
Texas Jack.....By Texas Jack Himself
Wild Bill.....By Wild Bill Himself
Snakeroot Sam.....F. G. Maeder
(Author of the Drama.)

Other characters by the Tribe of Indians and Dramatic Company.

POPULAR PRICES—Parquette and Parquette Circle, 50 Cts; Dress Circle, 75 Cts; Reserved Seats, 75 Cts; Family Circle, 25 Cts.

MATINEE — Wednesday at 2 o'clock. Admission to all parts of the house, except Dress Circle, 25 Cts; Dress Circle, 50 Cts.

Monday, September 22, the regular company. septl:

Author's Collection

Advertisement from the Columbus, Ohio, *Daily Dispatch*, September 12, 1873.

Patrons eagerly anticipated the well-publicized show and pandemonium reigned. *The Daily Gazette* of September 23 noted that "the orchestra was crowded, the galleries jammed," and the balcony filled in Mozart Hall. The noisy crowd enjoyed the play and when the curtain fell, it was on a stage full of slain Indians with Buffalo Bill standing in proud triumph over his victims. According to the Gazette, "The braves and border men who again and again sunk under the ruthless tomahawk," but "who pluckily wouldn't die," were a hit.

From Ohio, the troupe traveled to Kentucky and spent September 29–30 in Lexington. "There is no plot. . . . The very absurdity of the scenes lend an interest which would probably be lacking if they approached nearer a true representation of border life," penned one reviewer in the *Kentucky Gazette* on October 1. A cheerless reporter of the *Daily Lexington Press* wrote on September 30, "That state of existence has no charms for us. If it be as represented, it is full of deeds of blood, an unendless [sic] squabble with the Indians and all sorts of sensational adventures, in which the noble red men invariably get the worst of it in their encounters with the pale faces. What the plot of the play is, it is almost impossible to comprehend." The reviewer further commented, "Wild Bill. . . while very handsome, is no actor at all. His part seems to be to do the bloody work and say as little as possible."

October 2–4 the troupe played Louisville, where the *Louisville Courier Journal* remarked, "The audience was on tip-toe to see the scouts make their appearance and slay everybody laying around loose, and nicely they finished the job, the last man grieving that there is no one left 'to chaw up' having serious intentions to commit suicide for that reason, when the curtain falls." On October 4 the reviewer added, "The boys. . . are as lively as crickets, killing everything right and left. The galleries enjoy the wholesale slaughter and only seemed to regret that they couldn't take a hand in the tustle [sic]. If the company would just elect a coroner, we think it would make the combination complete."

Avoiding a yellow fever outbreak in the South, the combination went to Dayton, Ohio, and then to Terre Haute, Indiana, for three days of performances, October 9–11. Hearty audiences excited by the performances greeted them. The enthusiastic Terre Haute *Daily Express* proclaimed on October 11 that it was "well worth one's while to go and see it."

THE TERRE HAUTE *Evening Gazette* reported on October 10 that "Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill, with their long, ambrosial locks streaming in the wind, attracted much attention as they circulated about town yesterday. . . . B.B., or either of his associates, from what we saw of them last night, could toss an enemy out of pistol range of themselves in case of an emergency, and need no weapons."

On October 13 and 14, the troupe's performance at Indianapolis was compared to an earlier appearance with Buntline. "Bison Wilhelm" reportedly demonstrated marked improvement in his chosen profession. Hickok, who only six weeks before had been on the plains and knew nothing of a theater's workings, had shown "a wonderful adap-

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tability. He is a fine noble looking man and those familiar with his brilliant record regarded him with eyes of wonder and amazement," said the *Indianapolis Journal* on October 14.

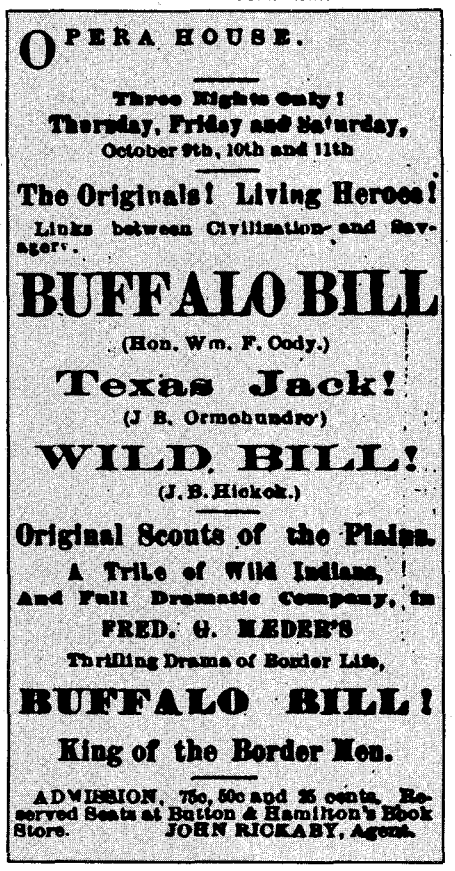
The next day, the combination arrived at the Lafayette, Indiana, Opera House. About the streets they collected a crowd of "gaping men and open-eyed, awe-stricken youths." The *Lafayette Daily Journal* on October 16 believed that the majority of the audience that evening were devotees of dime novels who came to view their heroes up close and in person. It reported that "there is no dramatic merit in the play presented. . . and having once seen the 'Scouts of the Plains,' no one would desire to see them again, be the parties genuine 'scouts' or otherwise."

HOWEVER, the *Fort Wayne Gazette* on October 18 raved over the scouts' performances. "The play was so exciting as to literally throw the gallery gods. . . into ecstasies of delight, while the lovers of dime novel literature were in the seventh heaven of happiness." The reporter for the October 23 *Toledo Blade* disagreed. "Border life'. . . is composed of a score of impossible situations and the dialogue is disjointed and bad. But the object aimed at by the author is reached in affording the 'heroes' ample opportunity to display themselves and their powers and the mode of warfare in vogue in savage life. The troupe is inferior to others which have appeared in Toledo and is constructed mainly for entertainment of readers of blood-and-thunder literature."

The best advertisement for the October 25 Sandusky, Ohio, show was a parade of Indians and scouts in the streets prior to the performance. The drama itself was thought to be "nothing peculiar beyond being a chain of striking pictures loosely strung together," remarked the *Sandusky Daily Register* on October 27. However, it added, "The scenes of struggle and death were vividly rendered and the closing tableaux called forth repeated applause."

When the combination reached Cleveland, Ohio, it appeared at Brainard's Opera House October 27 and 28. "Buffalo Bill, the king of the border men, dashing Texas Jack, and the great plainsman, humble scout, and law-preserver Wild Bill, created a decided sensation," noted the *Cleveland Leader* on October 28. Two days later the *Akron Daily Beacon* announced that "the show baffles description for it is peculiarly its own kind but there is plenty of fun to be enjoyed from it."

Both: Author's Collection


OPERA HOUSE.

Three Nights Only!
Thursday, Friday and Saturday,
October 9th, 10th and 11th

The Originals! Living Heroes!
Links between Civilization and Savagery.

BUFFALO BILL
(Hon. Wm. F. Cody.)

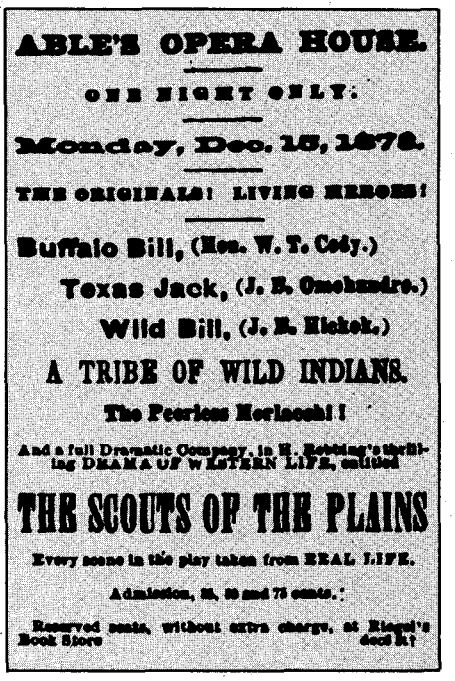
Texas Jack!
(J B. Ormohundro)

WILD BILL!
(J. B. Hickok.)

Original Scouts of the Plains.
A Tribe of Wild Indians,
And Full Dramatic Company, in
FRED. G. MEDER'S
Thrilling Drama of Border Life,

BUFFALO BILL!
King of the Border Men.

ADMISSION, 75c, 50c and 25 cents. Reserved Seats at Button & Hamilton's Book Store. JOHN RICKABY, Agent.


ABLE'S OPERA HOUSE.

ONE NIGHT ONLY.

Monday, Dec. 15, 1873.

THE ORIGINALS! LIVING HEROES!

Buffalo Bill, (Hon. W. T. Cody.)
Texas Jack, (J. B. Omohundro.)
Wild Bill, (J. B. Hickok.)

A TRIBE OF WILD INDIANS.

The Peerless Morlacchi!

And a full Dramatic Company, in H. Robbins's thrilling DRAMA OF WESTERN LIFE, entitled

THE SCOUTS OF THE PLAINS

Every scene in the play taken from REAL LIFE.

Admission, 25, 50 and 75 cents.

Reserved seats, without extra charge, at Riegel's Book Store

Left: Advertisement from the *Easton* (Pennsylvania) Daily Express, December 6, 1873. Right: Advertisement from the Terre Haute, Indiana, *Evening Gazette*, October 9, 1873.

"'Border life'. . . is composed of a score of impossible situations and the dialogue is disjointed and bad. But the object aimed at by the author is reached in affording the 'heroes' ample opportunity to display themselves and their powers and the mode of warfare in vogue in savage life."

On November 6 Cody's troupe was in Titusville, Pennsylvania. They attracted larger houses than any of the local "legitimate" theaters were able to, and "the audience were well entertained to the close, as they attested by frequent and prolonged applause," said the *Titusville Morning Herald.*

The entertainers encountered some trouble with local bullies in Titusville. To avoid confrontation, the troupe was asked to use a side entrance to their hotel. Hickok, never one to dodge a fight, sauntered into the hotel billiard room and, according to Hickok biographer Joseph G. Rosa, "laid out four or five of the crowd and drove the rest out of the room."

Detouring to New York State, the company performed November 8 at Jones' Hall in Jamestown. The *Jamestown Daily Journal* invited those "in need of a jolly laugh" to attend. Then the troupe headed north to Buffalo for a November 10–13 stay at St. James Hall. The *Buffalo Evening Post* of November 12 admitted that "if the drama does not contain sensational variety enough to delight the most exacting, we cannot indicate where it can be found."

A week later Cody's company appeared at Erie, Pennsylvania. In the customary pre-show parade, the "Modocs," as Indians in the troupe were called, attracted much attention. The November 14 *Erie Morning Dispatch* described the scouts as being "among the finest looking men on the continent." However, the drama itself was reported the next day to have "scarce the shadow of a plot and is like an animated dime novel with the Indian killing multiplied by ten but it was enjoyable. . . and the bloodier the tragedy, the broader was the comedy."

The scouts played Pittsburgh November 17–22. The troupe introduced a new play, "The Scouts of the Plains," by Hiram Robbins, demonstrating frontier life, the perils of settlers, and the contest between them and Indians, the lat-

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THE PROGRAMME

ON THE TRAIL

The Scouts of the Plains!

BUFFALO BILL,
TEXAS JACK,
WILD BILL.

Dramatic Company, Tribe of Indians

PROGRAMME FOR THIS EVENING.

Fred. G. Maeder's Famous Western Drama,

Buffalo Bill!

KING OF THE BORDER MEN!

In Three Acts.

Buffalo Bill ..... Buffalo Bill Himself
Texas Jack ..... Texas Jack Himself
Wild Bill ..... Wild Bill Himself
THE OLD VET, an 1812 Pounder, (Author of the Drama) ..... FRED G. MAEDER
Snakeroot Sam, Down on Snakes ..... Walter Fletcher
Col. Jake McKandless ..... Alfred Johnson
Alf Coyle, a Renegade ..... W. S. MacEvoy
Merry Mullins, The Sentinel ..... R. Wheeler
Perkins, a Landlord ..... E. N. Watson
Flipup ..... W. G. Specke
Stockwell ..... E. Cunningham

INDIANS.

Fire Water Tom, a Drunken Red ..... J. V. Arlington
"Oof" "Oof" "Oof" "Oof" "Oof"
Raven Feather, a Sioux Brave ..... Jas. Johnson
Big Maple, a warrior ..... By the
Little Elk, the same ..... Tribe
White Arrow, the same ..... from the
Little Panther, the same ..... Plains
Ma-no-tee, the Princess of the Ogallalla Sioux ..... Esther Rubens

LADIES.

Lillie Fielding, the Rose of the Plains ..... Lizzie Safford
Lottie Fielding, the Wild Bud ..... Eliza Hudson
Mrs. Fielding ..... Jennie Fisher
KITTY MULDOON, an Irish Girl ..... RENA MAEDER

Edith Harmon Photo

The combination appeared at Lafayette, Indiana, on October 15, 1873, where a member of the Hickok family acquired this "programme." On the reverse is a history of the three scouts.

ter aided by desperate highwaymen who used them to carry out their nefarious plans. The play was an addition to the troupe's combination of dramas.

Buffalo Bill wrote his own promotion for the November 26 Williamsport, Pennsylvania, show, saying, "Tell the editors I'm coming, with Texas Jack, Wild Bill, and a corps of red men." With the troupe of eighteen Indians they were "an unparalleled success. No previous troupe had ever attracted such audiences for two successive nights," wrote the *Gazette and Bulletin* on November 28. Twelve hundred people witnessed the play on the last evening. Buffalo Bill "won a host of friends . . . during his short sojourn." The newspaper proclaimed he was not the "rough uncouth specimen of humanity that many might imagine him to be, but a gentleman in the true sense of the term."

The actors arrived November 28 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where the *Daily Record* advised its readers to "look out for your scalp and keep on the sunny side of them." To relax between shows, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill played billiards in the afternoon. The paper noted on November 29 that Hickok "is quite a Shot—on the table." In Scranton for their next show, the number of Indians reported massacred was 400. Earlier reports of a much lesser number suggest that many were resurrected only to be slaughtered again!

December 10 found the dramatic company in New Jersey. Three days later they backtracked to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for one night, then moved on to Easton. Newspapers praised the show as "historical besides being instructive and agreeable." The *Easton Daily Express* lauded Buffalo Bill for having come so far in his theatrical career. It also described Texas Jack and Wild Bill as "large, powerful, fine-looking men." While Hickok performed in Easton he suffered from a cold so severe that most of his lines had to be omitted.

The *Harrisburg Daily Patriot* of December 20 reported the audience was "loth [sic] to leave the hall" after the two-hour show. The next week the troupe was in Baltimore, Maryland. Interestingly, Cody was not the only one who played the title role in the drama. On a previous evening, another company performed "Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men," with "Jas. M. Ward" playing Buffalo Bill, and S.K. Chester taking the part of Texas Jack.

CODY'S TROUPE entertained Philadelphians from December 29 through January 3, 1874, then traveled to Bridgeport, Connecticut. Despite rain, a large audience assembled to see the bloody portrayals of frontier life. On January 7, the *Bridgeport Daily Standard* noted the admirable qualities of the actors, saying, "these scouts have splendid manly forms which their wild lives on the plains have admirably developed and their bearing on the stage is what might naturally be expected from men of undaunted bravery."

The troupe traveled to Hartford, Connecticut, then Providence, Rhode Island, and arrived in Portland, Maine, for shows on January 29–30. On one of those evenings, a noisy poker game in the next room kept Wild Bill awake. Upon his inquiry, the participants invited him to join them. While pretending ignorance of the game, Hickok deftly cleaned them out. As he left he remarked, "Better think twice after this before waking a man up and inviting him to play poker." The troupe continued to tour Maine, stopping in Augusta, Bangor, and Lewiston.

The *New York Clipper* reported on February 7 that the scouts were "greeted with crowded houses everywhere." On the same day the *Clipper* noted the results of a clay pigeon shooting match, pairing a Dr. Aten and a Mr. Hickok against one Warren Birdseye and a Mr. Baylis. "The Score—Aten 10, Hickok 9 . . . Baylis 10, Birdseye 6." Hickok may or may not have been Wild Bill.

Tickets sold out early for the enter-

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Itinerary of Wild Bill Hickok's stage career with Buffalo Bill

Sept. 8, 1873	New Brunswick, NJ	Nov. 8	Jamestown, NY	Jan. 8	New Haven, CT
Sept. 9	West Chester, PA	Nov. 10–13	Buffalo, NY	Jan. 10	Waterbury, CT
Sept. 11–13	New York City, NY	Nov. 14–15	Erie, PA	Jan. 12	Middletown, CT
Sept. 15–17	Columbus, OH	Nov. 17–22	Pittsburgh, PA	Jan. 13–14	Hartford, CT
Sept. 22–27	Cincinnati, OH	Nov. 24	Johnstown, PA	Jan. 16–17	Providence, RI
Sept. 29–30	Lexington, KY	Nov. 26–27	Williamsport, PA	Jan. 20	Taunton, MA
Oct. 2–4	Louisville, KY	Nov. 28	Wilkes-Barre, PA	Jan. 21	New Bedford, MA
Oct. 6	Hamilton, OH	Nov. 29	Scranton, PA	Jan. 29–30	Portland, ME
Oct. 7	Dayton, OH	Dec. 2	Port Jervis, NY	Feb. 2	Augusta, ME
Oct. 9–11	Terre Haute, IN	Dec. 10	Newark, NJ	Feb. 4–5	Bangor, ME
Oct. 13–14	Indianapolis, IN	Dec. 11	Trenton, NJ	Feb. 6	Lewiston, ME
Oct. 15	Lafayette, IN	Dec. 13	Bethlehem, PA	Feb. 10–11	Concord, NH
Oct. 17–18	Fort Wayne, IN	Dec. 15	Easton, PA	Feb. 12	Manchester, NH
Oct. 22–23	Toledo, OH	Dec. 16	Pottstown, PA	Feb. 13	Haverhill, MA
Oct. 24	Fremont, OH	Dec. 17	Reading, PA	Feb. 20	Springfield, MA
Oct. 25	Sandusky, OH	Dec. 18	Lancaster, PA	Feb. 24–25	Troy, NY
Oct. 27–28	Cleveland, OH	Dec. 19	Harrisburg, PA	Feb. 26–28	Albany, NY
Oct. 29–30	Akron, OH	Dec. 22–23	Baltimore, MD	Mar. 2	Schenectady, NY
Nov. 1	New Castle, PA	Dec. 29–		Mar. 3–4	Utica, NY
Nov. 4	Meadville, PA	Jan. 3, 1874	Philadelphia, PA	Mar. 6–7	Syracuse, NY
Nov. 6	Titusville, PA	Jan. 6–7	Bridgeport, CT	Mar. 10–11	Rochester, NY

tainers' foray in Concord, New Hampshire, on February 10 and 11. The *Concord Daily Monitor* remarked that the company "labored under disadvantage on account of the small stage, which necessitated the crowding of the scenery and circumscribed the field of operations of the 'villainous red skins.'"

"Those walking dime novels" as the *Troy* (New York) *Times* called the Buffalo Bill combination, performed for two nights in Troy on February 24 and 25. The newspaper reported that an agent of the troupe said "not a week has elapsed since the formation of the company in which the 'living heroes' have not each received $500 as his share of the profits, and some weeks the dividend has been $800." On March 7 the *Clipper* reported that the "receipts of the two performances amounted to over $1900." At the rate of thirty-five, fifty, and seventy-five cents per seat, that was an astounding return. The paper noted that, with his share of the money, "Texas Jack . . . bought a fine thoroughbred colt, very fast and promising."

At the end of February, the combination appeared at Martin's Opera House in Albany, New York. "However abounding in incongruities, gun powder and Indians, there is still a great deal of fun and interest in the play and it is not more improbable than half the stuff that holds the stage at the present time," declared the *Albany Evening News* on February 28.

The scouts moved to Schenectady, New York, on March 2. The bill in the *Schenectady Evening Star* advertised the play as one containing "many points of interest, while in continuity of plot and sensational tableaux is the best we ever saw of its class."

While in Schenectady, the scouts were taken for a ride in the local stableman's best rig. On their return Cody presented the man with an engraved horsewhip to mark the occasion. The troupe was in Utica March 3 and 4. Between shows they visited the state lunatic asylum. The scouts were escorted throughout the hospital, attracting the attention and admiration of the female patients. "Buffalo Bill found a male patient who said he was Buffalo Bill No. 2 and one of the females laughed at the Scouts for wearing such long-haired wigs," reported the *Utica Daily Observer*.

In Rochester, New York, on March 10 and 11, the hall was filled as it had never been for any entertainment before. Hundreds of people were turned away at the door. Inside, people sat on anything they could, or stood in any available space. The scouts "appeared on stage with great ease and brought out the scenes of border life with great power and naturalness," reported the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* on March 11.

Despite the money, crowded houses, and adulation of the audiences, Wild Bill Hickok was unhappy with show business. Unlike Cody, who craved attention, Wild Bill thought the men were making fools of themselves. Homesick for the plains he loved, he became disgruntled and began amusing himself by deliberately shooting supers' legs at close range; the resulting powder burns from the blanks caused them to jump around the stage in pain instead of "dying." Their complaints forced Cody to admonish Hickok about his behavior.

Finally, Hickok could no longer stand the sham of acting and left the combination in Rochester. A reporter stopped him on the street the day after the troupe left, and Hickok told him that he had received a call to the frontier as there was danger of war with the Indians and his services as scout and Indian fighter were needed. Two years later, on August 2, 1876, at Deadwood, Dakota Territory, Wild Bill was murdered as he played cards in a saloon with friends. His assassin, Jack McCall, was hanged for the crime.

Texas Jack Omohundro left Cody's troupe in 1876 to form his own. He died of pneumonia in Leadville, Colorado, in 1880.

Cody continued performing, eventually creating his world-famous "Wild West" exhibition. But in 1873 and 1874, he, Texas Jack Omohundro, and Wild Bill Hickok had been an unlikely trio of actors. Nevertheless, their performances on the brief eastern tour helped fix the legendary West in the American imagination.

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Carson and Beale Save an Army

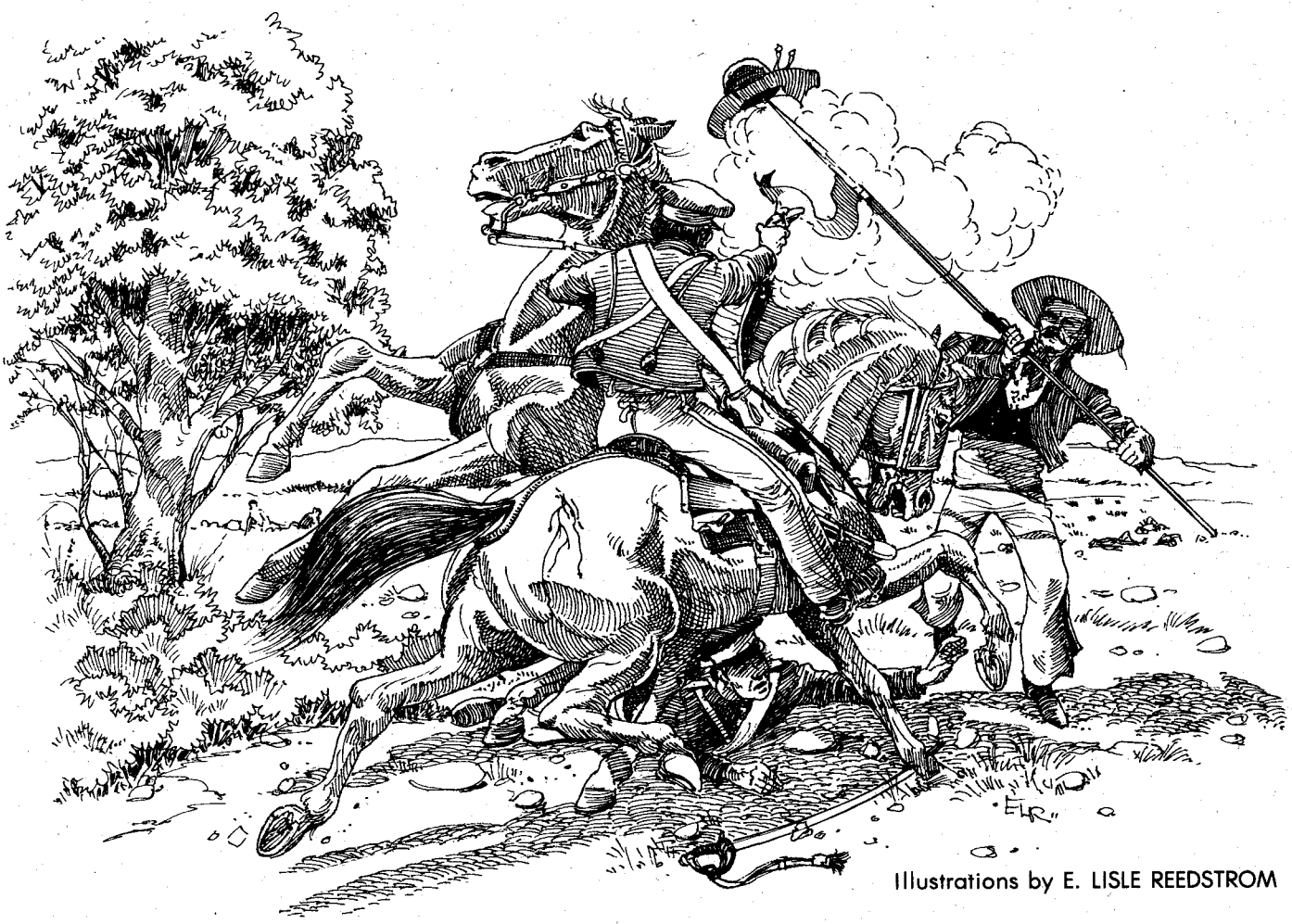
By PHILLIP H. AULT

They were an oddly matched pair and had known each other only a few days—Kit Carson, veteran frontier scout and Indian fighter, and eager young Navy Lieutenant Edward F. Beale, who had been transferred from a warship into the midst of a deadly land battle. They had little in common except bravery and patriotism. Together with Beale's Indian servant, they saved the encircled United States Army of the West from probable annihilation with a daring nighttime rescue mission through enemy lines during the American conquest of California.

Rarely in the early military history of the West was a United States Army force in such peril as that faced by Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny's men that raw, wet night of December 8, 1846. Clustered on a barren, rocky hilltop, they were trapped—surrounded on the plain below by swift-riding Californio horsemen whose razor-sharp lances already had inflicted heavy casualties on them. Their only hope for rescue lay in obtaining reinforcements from the navy ships anchored at the village of San Diego thirty miles away, commanded by Commodore Robert F. Stockton.

Though grandiosely titled the Army of the West, Kearny's force was small. It consisted of approximately one hundred men. His depleted force of dragoons had been reinforced a few days earlier by about twenty-five navy men, including Beale, who had come from San Diego to escort them on what Kearny mistakenly expected to be a virtually unopposed march to the shores of the Pacific. The Americans were substantially outnumbered by the California men under Mexican General Andres Pico.

Kearny's men had been forced unexpectedly into their critical plight. After a long and exhausting march across the desert from New Mexico, they had un-



Illustrations by E. LISLE REEDSTROM

Eighteen Americans were killed. Thirteen others, including Kearny, were cut up by the long enemy lances, some with as many as eight wounds.

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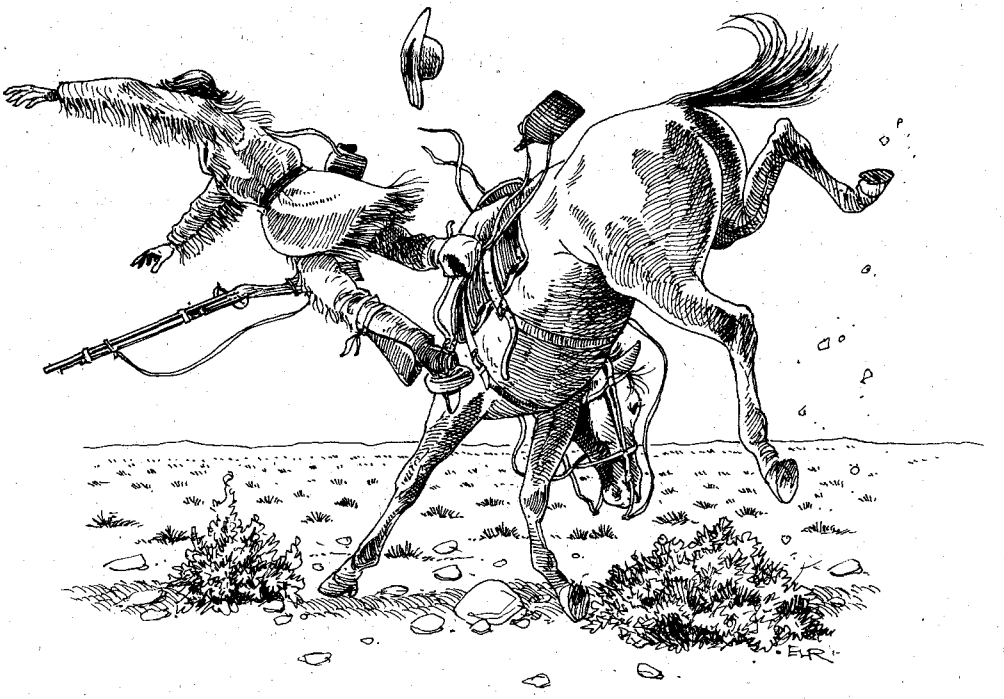
wisely made a predawn attack on the Californios two days earlier at the Indian village of San Pasqual. Instead of the easy victory Kearny expected, the Americans were badly mauled. Eighteen of them were killed. Thirteen others, including Kearny, were cut up by the long enemy lances, some with as many as eight wounds.

Both Carson and Beale fought at San Pasqual but escaped unharmed, although Carson was almost killed while riding at the front of the charge. His horse fell and threw him, and the entire attacking force had to ride over and around him. His rifle was broken in half, so he grabbed one from the body of a dead soldier and charged ahead on foot.

Eventually the Americans fought their way up to the temporary refuge of the hilltop, quickly named Mule Hill. There they found themselves in a trap. Without horses, and burdened with their wounded, they faced the probability of a slaughter if they advanced on foot down into the midst of the slashing, swirling enemy horsemen.

Captain Henry Turner, Kearny's second-in-command, described the situation bluntly in a letter to his wife after the rescue: "In our encumbered and reduced condition, it is altogether probable that they would not have left one of us to tell the tale."



Carson's horse fell and threw him, and the entire attacking force had to ride over and around him. His rifle was broken in half.

IN HIS JOURNAL Major William H. Emory, an army topographer with Kearny, provides a graphic description of the Americans. "Our provisions were exhausted, our horses dead, our mules on their last legs, and our men, now reduced to one-third of their number, worn down by fatigue, and exhausted."

The wounded Kearny turned over temporary command to Turner. Within a few hours after the battle, the captain sent Alex Godey, one of the scouts, and three companions on a roundabout route to San Diego, carrying an appeal to Stockton for help, including ambulances to carry the wounded.

Two days later, on the eighth, the beleaguered troops waited and watched atop Mule Hill for Stockton's relief column to arrive. It never came. Instead, to their dismay, they looked down that morning and saw the Californio horsemen capture Godey and his companion as they tried to sneak back to the hilltop.

Even had Godey reached the hilltop, the message he carried would only have discouraged Kearny's force even more. In it Stockton said that he had no horses or vehicles available, so he was sending no help. Stockton's decision, of course, was based on outdated information. He did not know that Kearny and his men were trapped on the hill.

Months later, speaking to the United States Senate from information supplied to him by Kit Carson, Senator Thomas Hart Benton described what happened next on Mule Hill. "Then it was that black despair fell upon the American camp. Without provisions, without power to move, besieged by conquerors, without hope of relief—a surrender of discretion, or death in vain effort to escape, were the only alternatives. Men and officers, one and all, unhappy wounded with the rest, demanded to be led forth."

Kearny decided that he must act. He ordered the baggage burned, then formed the men around the wounded, who were in litters on mules. The little army would march down the hill on foot into the cavalry.

From the plain below, Pico watched the preparations. About noon, as Kearny's formation began to move, the Californio leader withdrew his pickets from the front of Mule Hill and assembled his force at the rear of the hill. In effect he was saying to Kearny, "The road to San Diego is open, if you dare to take it."

Kearny called a halt and conferred with his officers. After weighing the odds, the general ordered the march abandoned. He would once more appeal to Stockton for help—if the messengers could get through.

About 1:00 p.m., Beale volunteered to carry the message. Kearny asked him what companions he wished to go with him. "Kit Carson and my Indian servant," he replied. Carson agreed immediately but had to argue Kearny into letting him go. If the Indian were given an opportunity to refuse, records do not say so. The men agreed to depart as soon as darkness fell.

The three men were a strange trio. Carson, at thirty-one, illiterate but immensely daring and wise in frontier ways, already had begun to achieve the fame that has made him a symbol of western heroism. Beale, seven years younger, was an East Coast collegian and scion of a prominent navy family. His grandfather was Commodore Thomas Truxton, a hero of the Revolutionary War. Beale had come to the Pacific Ocean aboard Stockton's warship six months earlier. In later years he won prominence in western history as leader of the Army Camel Corps and as the man who carried the first official news of the California gold strike, with gold samples, back to Washington.

Not surprisingly, the Indian is a shadowy figure. The most commonly given version of his name is Che-muc-tah. Dr. John S. Griffin, the army's surgeon, referred to him in his journal as a Delaware Indian, which indicates

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he probably accompanied Beale from the East Coast as his shipboard servant.

The task was formidable. The men had to sneak through three lines of Californio pickets surrounding the hill, then work their way two miles across an open valley, in which more riders were circulating, to reach the partial safety of another line of hills. From there, a broken course of valleys and hills stretched to San Diego. Many ranchers along the route were sympathetic to the Mexican cause and were alert for Americans.

The messengers' route was strewn with granite boulders, stony stretches, and thickets of needle-sharp prickly pear cactus. Emory wrote in his journal, "There was little expectation that Carson and Beale would succeed in reaching San Diego."

Each man carried a rifle, a blanket, a revolver, a canteen, and a knife. Kearny invited Beale to eat with him before the three men departed, only to learn that the sole food left in his tent was a small portion of flour. The general ordered it to be baked into a loaf of bread for Beale. According to Benton's Senate speech, Beale refused the bread. Instead, he scraped through the smoldering pile of burned luggage until he found a portion of half-burned peas and grains of corn. Carson and the Indian found scraps of mule beef. The three must survive on those skimpy rations for a trip of some thirty hours, if they did get through.

As soon as dark fell, Carson, Beale, and the Indian started. They crawled on hands and knees, then on their stomachs, as they came to the first picket line. Soon they realized that their canteens rattled, so they discarded them. In his laconic style, Carson described their progress in his autobiography. "To avoid making noise while crawling over rocks and brush, we took our shoes off and fastened them under our belts. We could see three rows of sentinels, all mounted, and we would frequently have to pass within 20 yards of one." At one point, they crawled so close to the sentinels that they heard the men talking softly to each other and smelled the smoke of their slim Mexican cigars.

ALMOST holding their breath, the three men finally crawled past the third picket line undetected. Still crouching low and watching for single horsemen roaming on patrol, they made their way across the plain to the next hill. They lost their shoes in the process. Picking their way barefoot in the dark through the stones and prickly pear cactus was excruciatingly painful. All night they kept moving, and at first light they found a sheltered spot in a ravine in which to hide during daylight.

At dusk they started again. About twelve miles from San Diego they separated. They reasoned that by taking three different courses into the village, they would increase the chances that one of them could deliver the call for help to Stockton.

Late that evening, the Indian arrived safely but exhausted at Stockton's headquarters in the single-story adobe home of Don Juan Bandini. He blurted out a fragmentary report of Kearny's plight. About 10:00 p.m. two men carried Beale into the house. The naval officer's bare feet were torn, and he was in a state of mental distress. Then Carson arrived, having taken the longest route.

Stockton quickly realized the situation, formed a rescue party of 190 sailors and 80 marines from United States warships in the bay and dispatched them on foot in the night. They pulled a single cannon by ropes.

Back on Mule Hill, Kearny's men passed a restless, futile day. If the rescue mission did reach San Diego, they knew, at least another day must pass before help arrived. On the second day, December 10, Pico's force harassed the Americans by driving a band of wild

The task was formidable. The men had to sneak through three lines of Californio pickets surrounding the hill, then walk two miles across an open valley.

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"Our men behaved with admirable coolness, turning off the wild animals dexterously," Emory recorded. The attack turned into a boon, in a sense, because army cooks were able to make gravy soup from the carcasses of killed horses.

horses up the slope, hoping to create chaos.

"Our men behaved with admirable coolness, turning off the wild animals dexterously," Emory recorded. The attack turned into a boon, in a sense, because army cooks were able to make gravy soup from the carcasses of killed horses, practically a gourmet treat after the scraps of mule meat on which the men had survived.

Late that day, Dr. Griffin reported that all but two of the wounded had recovered sufficiently to ride saddled mules. Kearny gave a firm order. Tomorrow morning they would march down the hill, despite the odds, and face the waiting horsemen.

Restless, wondering what the morning would bring, the soldiers tried to sleep. As Emory put it, "We were all reposing quietly, but not sleeping, waiting for the dawn."

Then, suddenly, something exhiliarating happened. Emory wrote, "One of the men, in the part of the camp assigned to my defense, reported that he heard a man speaking English. In a few minutes we heard the tramp of a column, followed by the hail of the sentinel." Shouts of welcome greeted the rescue column. Soon the navy men were distributing provisions and clothing to the hungry but vastly relieved soldiers.

The rescuers had arrived without firing a shot because Pico's lancers, recognizing the strength of the combined American troops, had ridden away to fight another day, somewhere else. Later in the day the Americans set out on an unchallenged march to San Diego and a rain-soaked reunion with Carson, Beale, and the Indian who had saved the Army of the West.

Carson and the Indian recovered from their ordeals farily quickly. For Beale the price was severe, physically and mentally. Drawn together by their shared escape, Carson and Beale formed a longtime friendship, with the older scout assuming a protective role. As Carson explained, "Lieutenant Beale was sent aboard the frigate *Congress*. He had become deranged from the excessive exertions and did not entirely recover his health for two years."

After rest and treatment on the *Congress*, Beale lived with a Mexican family for several weeks. At the end of February 1847, Carson and Beale started eastward across the country for Washington, carrying army and navy dispatches respectively. During the first twenty days of their four-month trip, Carson had to lift Beale on and off his horse.

"I did not think he could live," Carson said in his autobiography, "but I took as good care of him as possible under the circumstances we were in, and before our arrival in Washington he was so far recovered as to be able to look out for himself." Those circumstances included a nighttime shower of Indian arrows from an abortive attack along the Gila River.

Carson, the rough frontiersman, was warmly received in Washington by Beale's socially prominent family. He said later, "I was trebly repaid for my care by the kindness and attention given me by his mother while I was in Washington."

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PIKE'S PEAK FI

By STEVE VOYNICK

The Pike's Peak gold rush was one of the formative events of the western frontier. As the West's second major gold rush, it created a territory, opened the little-explored central Colorado Rockies, accelerated settlement of the region between the Missouri River and California, and in just five hectic years, infused $25 million in gold into the faltering national wartime economy.

But the first year of the Pike's Peak rush, from the summer of 1858 to May 1859, was really a fiasco. Tens of thousands of people rushed to "Pike's Peak country" to share in what they hoped would be "the next California." But, incredibly, during that entire year, actual gold production amounted to a mere one hundred troy ounces worth less than $2,000.

Just how such a minimal amount of gold could have triggered a major rush reveals much about the United States in the late 1850s. Gold had been reported in the Colorado Rockies many times before the Pike's Peak rush. Spanish and French legends mentioned gold, and Americans reported gold often in the 1800s—James Purcell in 1803, Josiah Gregg in 1840, Bill Williams in 1841, and John C. Frémont in 1848.

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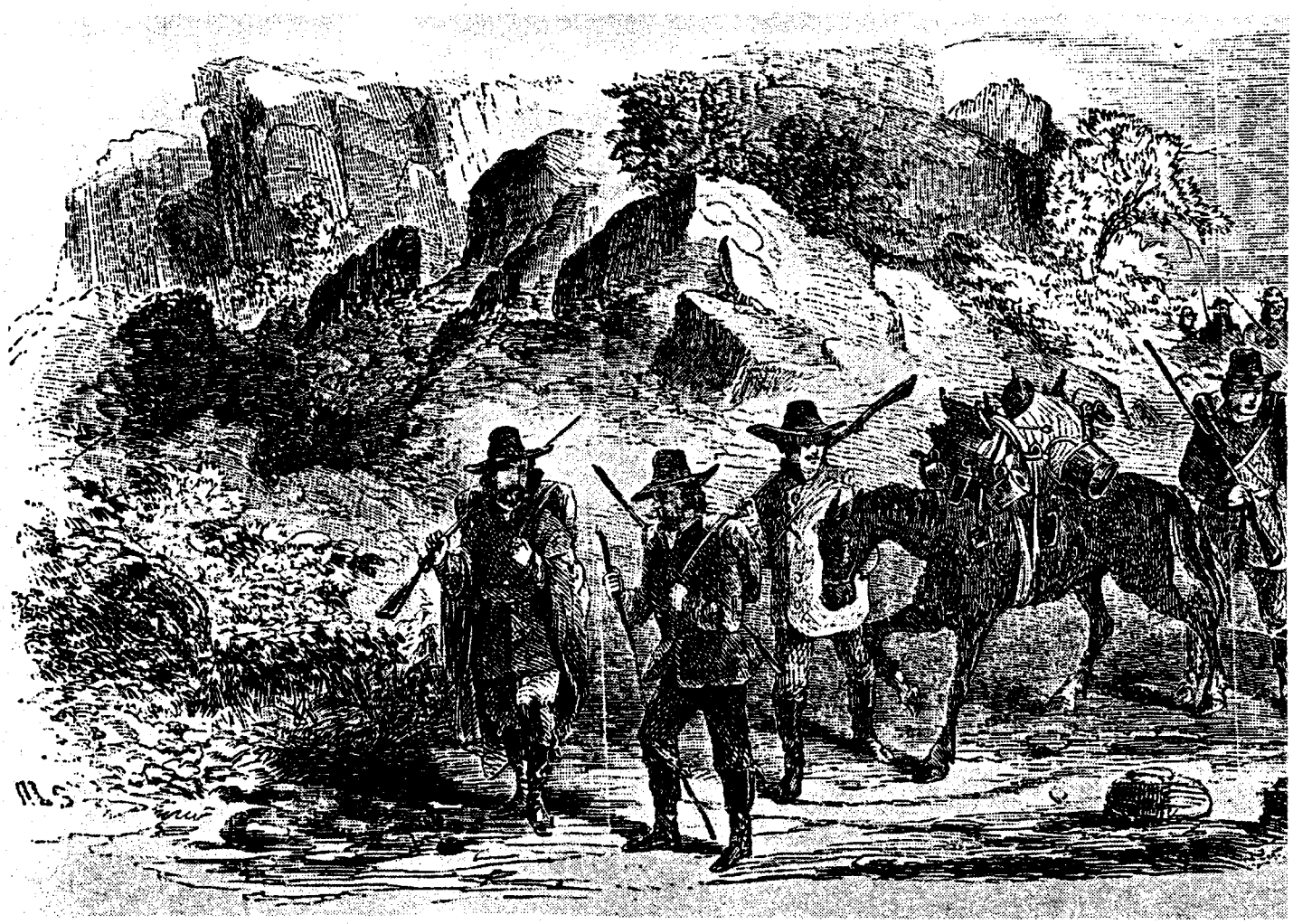
The discovery of the great California goldfields in 1848 dramatically dispelled any doubts about the existence of gold in the American West. Gold fever swept the nation and thousands of forty-niners trekked overland to California along established trails to the north and south of Colorado, steadfastly avoiding the rugged and seemingly impenetrable Colorado Rockies.

The first historically significant discoveries of Colorado gold came in 1849. Army contractor George Simpson, exploring a creek (within the present Denver city limits) whose bank was covered by a profusion of chokecherries, panned about "25 cents of gold."

Lured by the reports of Cherry Creek gold, a party of California-bound Cherokees soon arrived. They, too, found gold—enough to fill a goose



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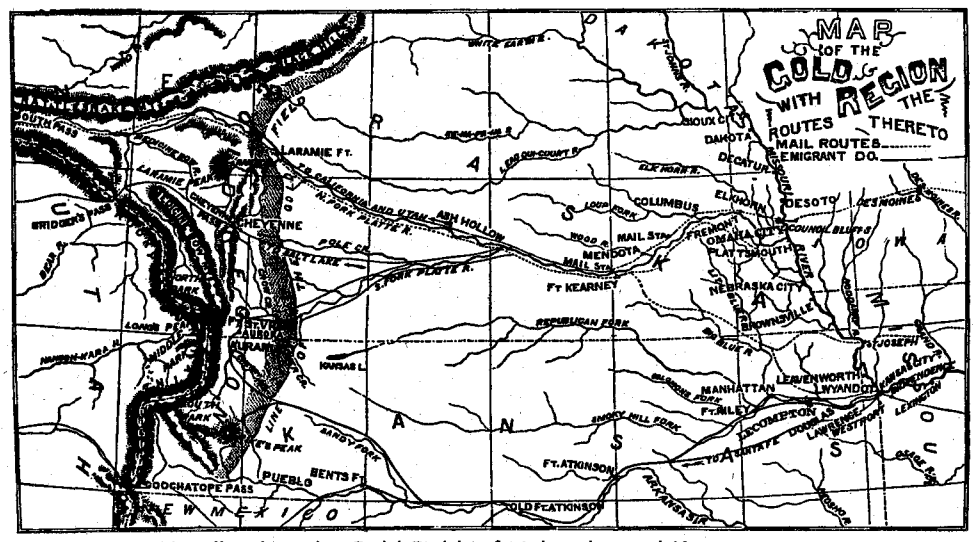
quill—on a tributary of Clear Creek. Their diary entries for June 20, 1850, included, "Gold found," and "We called this Ralston's Creek because a man of that name found gold here."

More reports filtered out of the Rockies, including one of systematic placer mining by soldiers stationed at Fort Massachusetts in the southern Colorado Rockies as early as 1852. Soldiers pursued limited but apparently profitable placer mining until the army abandoned the fort in 1858.

In 1854 a portion of present-day Colorado became part of Kansas Territory, giving businessmen in eastern Kansas a special interest in the recurring reports of gold. Should a gold rush ever develop, their towns would be the "jumping off' and outfitting points, promising huge profits. In 1855 the Lawrence, Kansas Territory, *Herald of Freedom* printed reports of "gold in great abundance" near the headwaters of the Arkansas River.


MAP OF THE GOLD REGION WITH THE ROUTES THERETO
MAIL ROUTES
EMIGRANT DO.
LARAMIE FT.
CHEYENNE
AURORA
DENVER
PUEBLO
BENTS FT.
FT. ATKINSON
FT. KEARNEY
MENDOTA
COLUMBUS
DESOTO
DES MOINES
COUNCIL BLUFFS
OMAHA CITY
PLATTSMOUTH
NEBRASKA CITY
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LEAVENWORTH
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FT. RILEY
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WESTPORT
SIOUX CITY
DAKOTA
DECATUR
ELKHORN
ASH HOLLOW
POLE CR.
SOUTH PASS
BRIDGER'S PASS
LARAMIE PEAK
PIKE'S PEAK
HOOCHATOPE PASS
OLD FT. ATKINSON
ARKANSAS RIVER
KANSAS R.
REPUBLICAN FORK
SMOKY HILL FORK
BLUE R.
NORTH PLATTE R.
SOUTH PLATTE R.
LOUP FORK
OLD HORN R.
WHITE EARTH R.
LEAD OR COURT R.
SEVEN MILE R.
TO ATCHISON
TO WESTPORT
TO LEAVENWORTH
TO ATCHISON
TO LEXINGTON
TO INDEPENDENCE
TO SAN FE
TO SANTA FE
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TO SANTA FE
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TO SANTA F

Developers and promoters were already laying out two town sites, Auraria and Denver, when the first wave of gold seekers arrived at Cherry Creek in the fall of 1858. Far more were heading for the Missouri River towns in eastern Kansas Territory to outfit and await spring before pushing west across the plains.

themselves, they eagerly embellished Russell's modest strike to their Kansas friends. Kansas newspapers printed every detail and created a few of their own. Those grossly exaggerated reports of "gold in the Pike's Peak country" were reprinted in Chicago and St. Louis newspapers and on September 20, 1858, hit the front page of *The New York Times*. Under the headline, "The gold excitement in Kansas," the newspaper explained that a prospecting party had returned from the Pike's Peak region and had "satisfactorily 'prospected' a rich gold region." Some of the gold reportedly resembled "the quartz soil washings of California." The newspaper report asserted that, "Thus it is rendered certain that the eastern as well as the western slope of the Rocky Mountains is richly treasured with gold. A new gold fever may be predicted as plainly at hand." The newspaper concluded, "We regard it now as a fixed FACT, beyond cavil or dispute, that we have in Kansas placers of gold equally as rich as those in California."

At the time such reports were printed, William Green Russell's thirteen men had found only twenty ounces of gold after four months of hard work. Divided equally, Russell's party had earned about thirty cents per day, much less than the going rate for unskilled labor. And, contrary to printed reports, no "quartz gold" had been found at all. Nevertheless, eastern Kansas newspapers continued to print every inflated rumor that drifted in from the western Kansas "mines."

On September 28, 1858, Kansas gold again hit the front page of *The New York Times* with its credibility then linked directly to General James William Denver, governor of Kansas Territory, who was obviously no better informed than anyone else. The article reported that Denver, writing to the secretary of the interior, "says the latest news from Pike's Peak leaves no room to doubt the correctness of reported discoveries of gold in that vicinity. . . . Prospectors have found gold embracing an extent of country of more than three hundred miles. The richest mines are found on Cherry Creek, a tributary of the South Platte, directly north of Pike's Peak. Governor Denver has not yet heard of quartz veins, but the placer formation would . . . indicate a great similarity between these mines and the first discoveries in California."

In truth, the "Kansas mines," were only holes dug in the gravel of the South Platte River bottom, most of which pro-

Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, April 1859

Pike's Peak gold seekers struggle across the Plains—before any worthwhile amounts of gold had been discovered.

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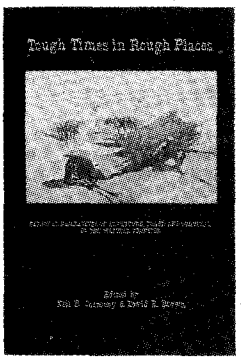

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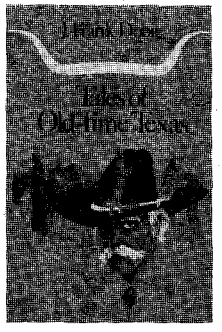

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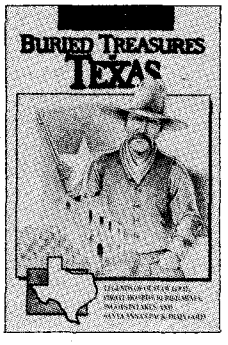

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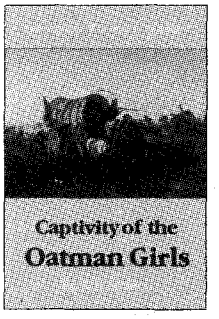

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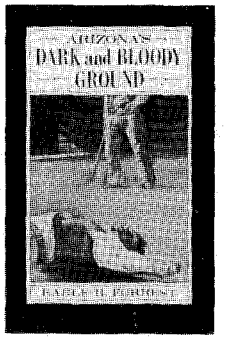

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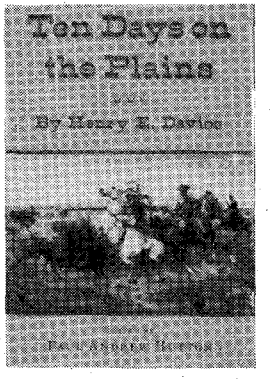

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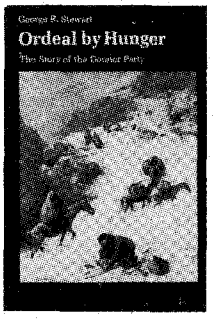

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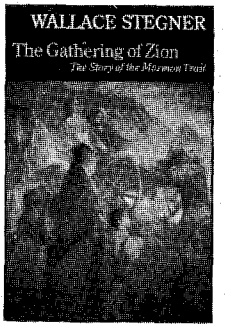

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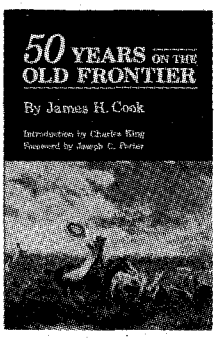

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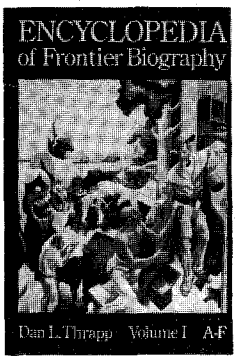

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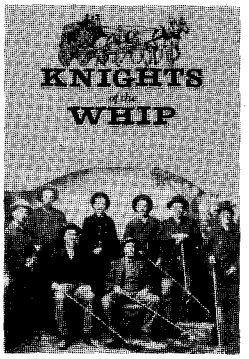

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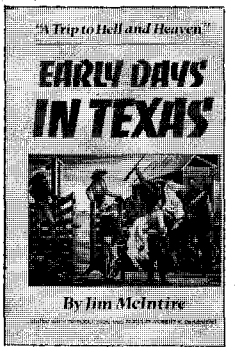

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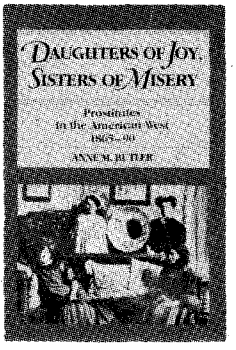

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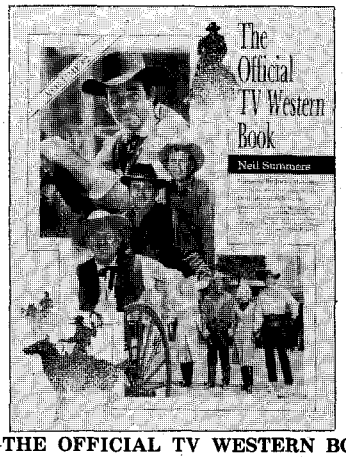

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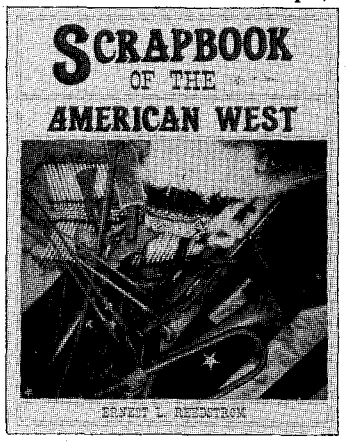

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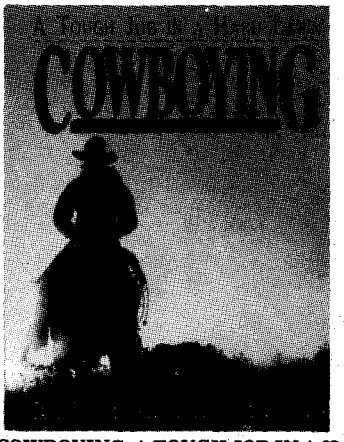

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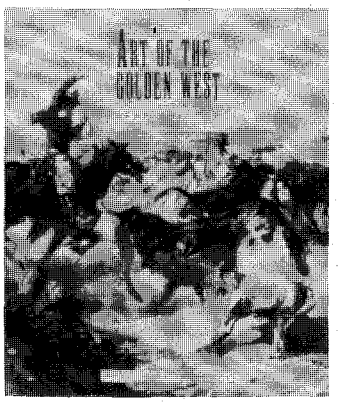

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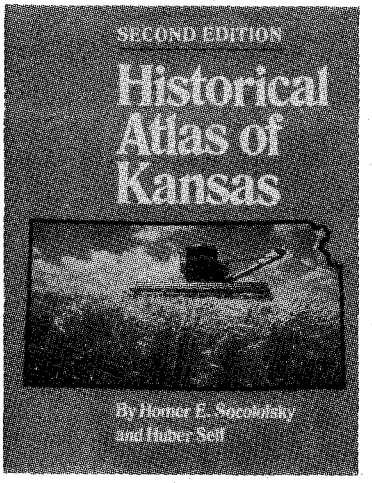

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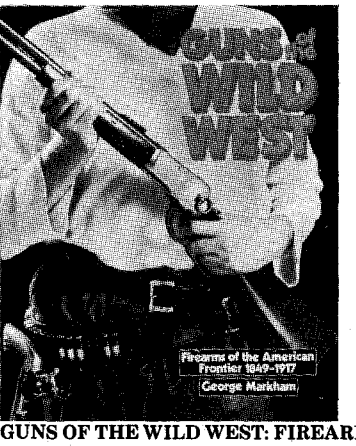

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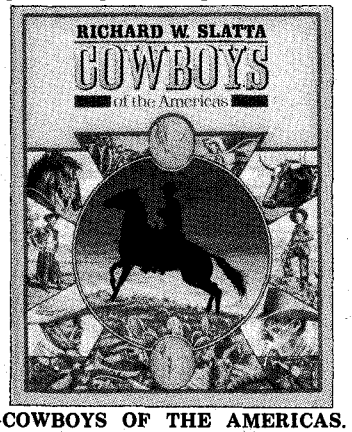

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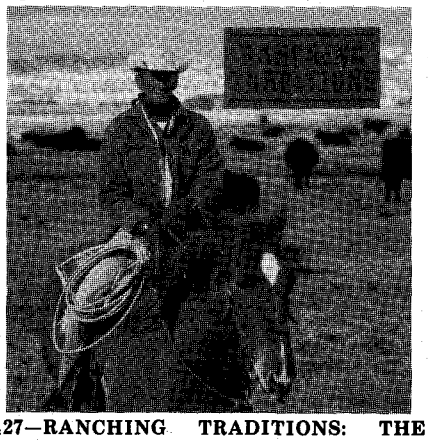

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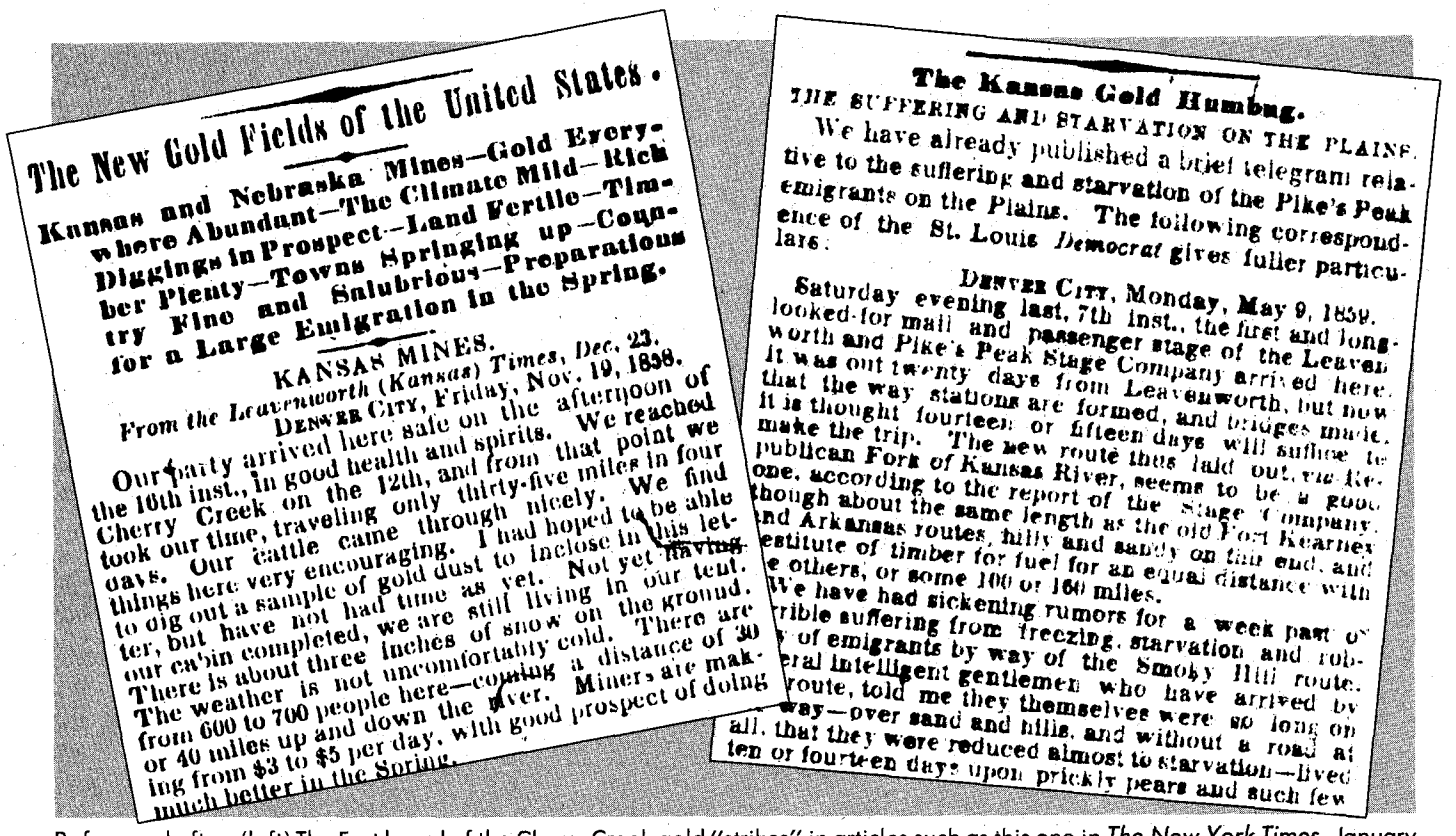

The New Gold Fields of the United States.

Kansas and Nebraska Mines—Gold Everywhere Abundant—The Climate Mild—Rich Diggings in Prospect—Land Fertile—Timber Plenty—Towns Springing up—Country Fine and Salubrious—Preparations for a Large Emigration in the Spring.

KANSAS MINES.

From the Leavenworth (Kansas) Times, Dec. 23.

DENVER CITY, Friday, Nov. 19, 1858.

Our party arrived here safe on the afternoon of the 10th inst., in good health and spirits. We reached Cherry Creek on the 12th, and from that point we took our time, traveling only thirty-five miles in four days. Our cattle came through nicely. We find things here very encouraging. I had hoped to be able to dig out a sample of gold dust to inclose in this letter, but have not had time as yet. Not yet having our cabin completed, we are still living in our tent. There is about three inches of snow on the ground. The weather is not uncomfortably cold. There are from 600 to 700 people here—coming a distance of 30 or 40 miles up and down the river. Miners are making from $3 to $5 per day, with good prospect of doing much better in the Spring.

The Kansas Gold Humbug.

THE SUFFERING AND STARVATION ON THE PLAINS.

We have already published a brief telegram relative to the suffering and starvation of the Pike's Peak emigrants on the Plains. The following correspondence of the St. Louis *Democrat* gives fuller particulars:

DENVER CITY, Monday, May 9, 1859.

Saturday evening last, 7th inst., the first and long-looked-for mail and passenger stage of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Stage Company arrived here. It was out twenty days from Leavenworth, but now that the way stations are formed, and bridges made, it is thought fourteen or fifteen days will suffice to make the trip. The new route thus laid out, via Republican Fork of Kansas River, seems to be a good one, according to the report of the Stage Company, though about the same length as the old Fort Kearney and Arkansas routes, hilly and sandy on this end, and destitute of timber for fuel for an equal distance with the others, or some 100 or 160 miles.

We have had sickening rumors for a week past of terrible suffering from freezing, starvation and robbery of emigrants by way of the Smoky Hill route. Several intelligent gentlemen who have arrived by that route, told me they themselves were so long on the way—over sand and hills, and without a road at all, that they were reduced almost to starvation—lived ten or fourteen days upon prickly pears and such few

Before and after: (left) The East heard of the Cherry Creek gold "strikes" in articles such as this one in *The New York Times*, January 3, 1859, which contained almost no truth whatever. (Right) This *New York Times* article broke the truth about the gold rush on April 20, 1859. Ironically, the Pike's Peak rush would be redeemed by bona fide gold strikes in just three more weeks.

duced just that—gravel—no quartz or lode gold. The little placer gold present occurred in tiny bits and flakes, not in California-sized nuggets. Yet on October 15 *The New York Times* offered this account, reprinted directly from the *Lawrence Republican*. "Mr. Ben Clement will arrive here [Westport] in a few days with some $500 in gold, which he took with nothing but camp tools and a pan; that with a rocker he could have done much better. Some of the men in company with Mr. Clement took out from twenty to one hundred and five dollars a day!

"He saw some of the finest specimens of quartz that probably have ever been found in a gold bearing region, and one nugget of gold, weighing twenty-three ounces."

If the merchants and newspapermen of western Kansas wanted a gold rush, they couldn't have picked a better time to promote one. In California, the wild excitement of 1849 had long faded, and thousands of restless miners milled about impatiently waiting for the "next California." In the East, the financial panic of 1857, a prolonged drought that ruined many farmers, and the nation's sectional tensions all worsened severe economic depression and rampant unemployment. Many Americans were ready for another major western gold rush.

Developers and promoters were already laying out two town sites, Auraria and Denver, when the first wave of gold seekers arrived at Cherry Creek in the fall of 1858. Far more were already heading for the Missouri River towns in eastern Kansas Territory to outfit and await spring before pushing west across the plains. The river towns boomed. Merchants and traders were hard pressed to keep up with the demand for horses, oxen, mules, wagons, tents, mining equipment, and general supplies, all of which they sold at inflated gold rush prices. Through it all, Kansas newspapers reported more gold than ever pouring out of the "Kansas mines."

GUIDEBOOK writers—few, if any, of whom had ever seen the Pike's Peak country—jumped on the bandwagon. They rushed nearly twenty pamphlet-style guidebooks into print, each describing preferred routes to Pike's Peak and Cherry Creek, and, of course, a detailed list of equipment to work the mines that didn't exist. One writer, D.C. Oakes, assured readers the overland trip was not at all arduous and that "gold is found everywhere you stick your shovel."

But on Cherry Creek, the reality was far different. After six months, the Russell party had accumulated about forty troy ounces worth perhaps $800—hardly the stuff of which "Californias" were made.

No one realized that better than James Pierce, who, along with the remaining ten members of the Russell party, had settled into crude cabins on Cherry Creek to wait out the winter. Years later Pierce recalled how astounded he was to see the early arrivals pouring in from the Missouri River. "By Christmas, there must have been a thousand men on the South Platte," he wrote. "As yet nothing worthy of excitement had been found, nothing but some little deposits near the Platte and the light float gold on Cherry Creek and a little bar on Ralston and gold on Clear Creek—these were all that had been found up to that time."

Pierce said that the emigrants, who had arrived too late to do their own prospecting, chose not to believe the truth of what the prospectors told them. "So many of them sat in their cabins writing big yarns, and many of them drawing largely on their prolific brains and writing back for truth what was nothing but hallucination of the brain."

Early in 1859 newspapers began changing the tone and content of their reports. Gone were the tales of twenty-three-ounce nuggets, men washing out one hundred dollars per day, and quartz gold rivaling California's best. In their

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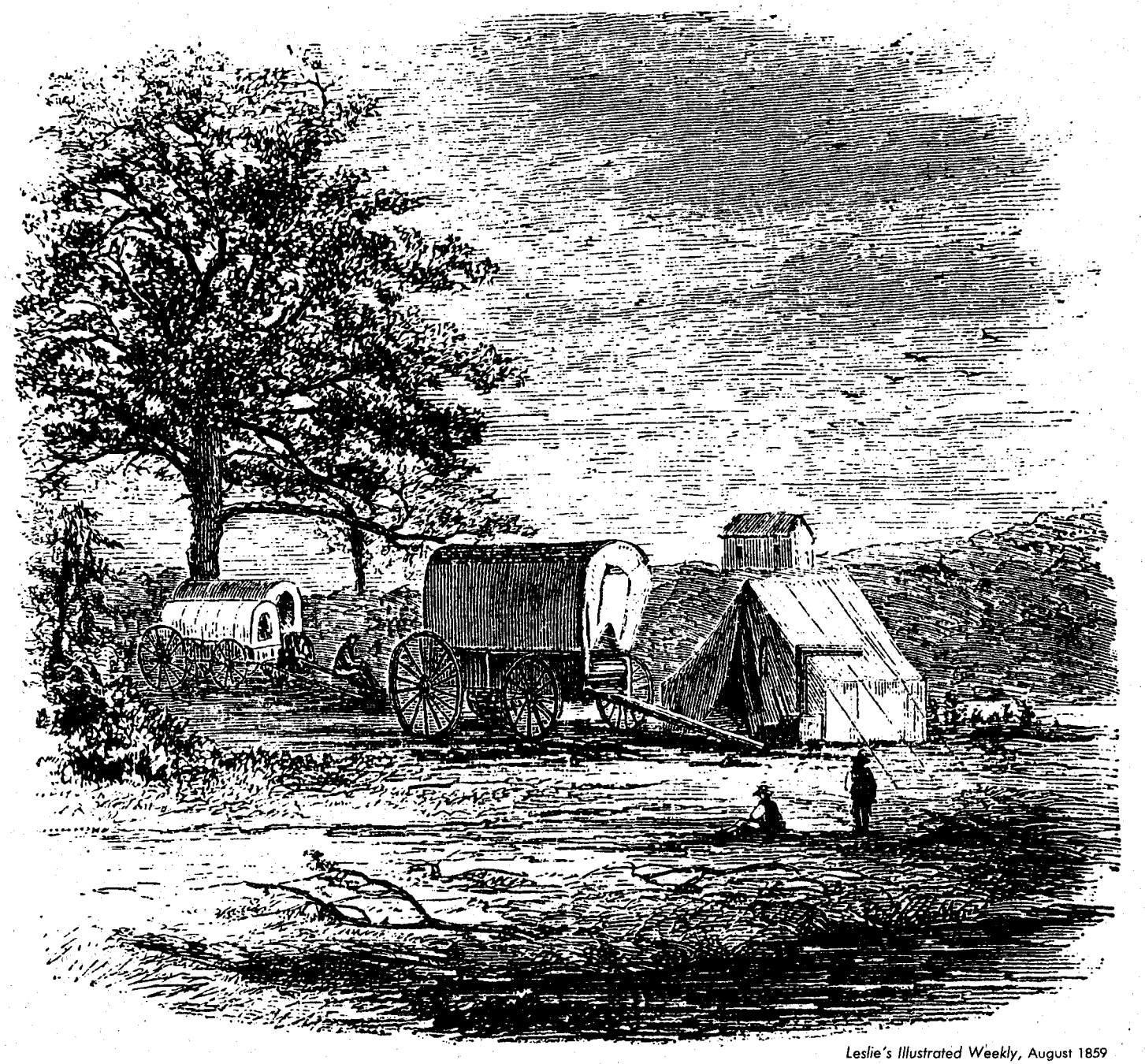
place came reports of building excitement in the Missouri River towns, confusing tales of "partial confirmation" of earlier discoveries, and even occasional mention of destitute, half-starved individuals straggling back east across the plains claiming the whole thing was nothing but a cruel hoax.

But emerging doubts failed to head off the great Pike's Peak gold rush. It began in earnest in February 1859 at the first hint of spring when thousands, then tens of thousands, headed west. They walked, rode, and pulled their own carts; the fortunate ones had ox-drawn wagons, the canvas often emblazoned with words that became forever a part of frontier history: "Pike's Peak or Bust."

The rush was nearly at its peak when *The New York Times* shocked its readers on May 18, 1859, with the headline, "The Pike's Peak Delusion." The story said that from the region, "We hear nothing of gold, but much disappointment, suffering and repentance. Miners are leaving in crowds. Pike's Peak is no California. Its gold is scarce; its climate inhospitable; its discouragement manifold. Famine, that grim visitor is there, and deaths have occurred from starvation." Citing the great migration of young men from the Mississippi Valley to the "supposed mines," the newspaper said, "They will return, some of them as can, stripped of everything, to begin again the labors from which visions of gold allured them."

The spring of 1859 was a time of terrible confusion, disappointment, and bitterness in Denver City. As the wide-eyed newcomers arrived they passed long lines of "go-backers," those who had arrived early, only to spend a long, hungry winter on the banks of Cherry Creek. When the new arrivals learned the truth about the "Kansas mines,"



Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, August 1859

A town-site camp near the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River.

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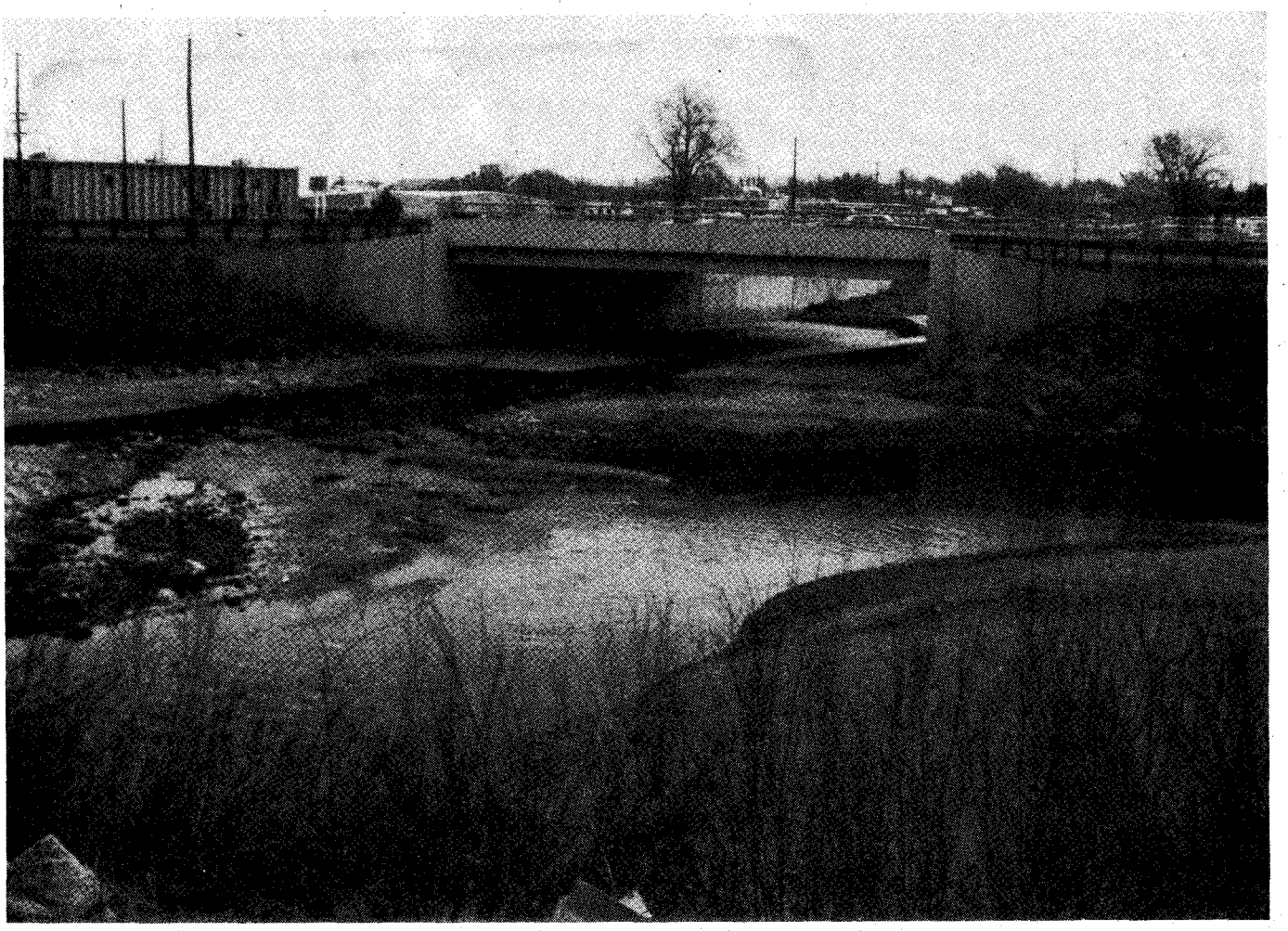

Author's Photo

The confluence of Dry Creek and the South Platte River, near where the strike that started the Pike's Peak rush was made, as it looks today.

many turned around the next day and, short on food and supplies, headed back east across the Plains, decrying the name of Pike's Peak.

On May 25, 1859, *The New York Times* told how the Pike's Peak rush had turned not only to bust, but to tragedy as well. Recounting a story from a St. Louis *Democrat* correspondent in Denver City, the newspaper said, "Many of the emigrants were dying of starvation, while others were subsisting on prickly pears and wild onions found along the road. The stage agent reported picking up a man named Blue, who was reduced to a skeleton from starvation. He had started with his two brothers. One of them died and the remaining two ate his body. A man named Gibbs had reached the mines in starving condition, and expressed the opinion that his party, numbering nine, had all perished. Many graves were reported along the route, and much property has been abandoned and destroyed along the road."

About half of the first wave of emigrants turned back after learning the truth. On many wagons, the "Pike's Peak or Bust" slogan was changed to "Busted, By God," Among the abandoned mining equipment and graves along the overland trails leading back east were a number of dummy tombstones, obviously erected by some who had purchased the Oakes guidebook, crudely inscribed with the words, "Here Lies the Body of D.C. Oakes, Killed for Aiding the Pike's Peak Hoax."

One stranded young gold seeker wrote home, "There is no gold at Pike's Peak. If you don't send me some money, I will starve to death."

IN ONE OF the great ironies of frontier history, as the lines of "go-backers" were at their longest, the Pike's Peak rush was redeemed. In early January 1859, prospector George Jackson had discovered a rich placer, not near Cherry Creek, but west in the rugged mountain canyons. He kept his discovery secret until spring, found some backers, and returned to the strike. In early May, Jackson and his partners returned to Denver with $2,000 in gold they had washed out in one week. Jackson's gold, about one hundred troy ounces, probably exceeded all the gold that had been mined at Cherry Creek in the past year.

Almost simultaneously, prospector John Gregory discovered a nearby rich outcropping of lode gold. The news had a galvanizing effect. Gold seekers deserted Denver City and the Cherry Creek placers overnight and surged into the Rockies, making new strikes, staking countless claims, and sharing in a true bonanza that, in just five years, paid $25 million in gold. By summer, the nation's newspapers cautiously printed the new reports of gold, and a second phase of the Pike's Peak gold rush got under way.

The Pike's Peak gold rush, at least the "fiasco" phase of the rush, was unlike any other. Most of those who assumed the greatest risks, dropping everything to rush to Pike's Peak country first, lost everything. Many of those who arrived almost a year "late" struck it rich.

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Major Bennet Riley and the Comanches

By JAMES A. CRUTCHFIELD

During the summer of 1829, Major Bennet Riley and a battalion of the United States Sixth Infantry Regiment skirmished with Comanches and Kiowas near Chouteau's Island in today's southwestern Kansas, marking only the second time in United States history that American soldiers had clashed with Indians west of the Mississippi River. The first engagement had been six years earlier when fur trappers and a contingent of the Sixth United States Infantry fought Arikaras on the Missouri River. Riley's encounters punctuated long periods of idleness while the army awaited the return of a caravan of Missouri traders along the Santa Fe Trail; Riley's overall mission was to see that those traders returned home safely.

The previous year, 1828, had not been a good one for Missouri traders, although it started off well enough when two large caravans made the journey to Santa Fe without incident. On the return trip, however, both parties ran into Indian trouble. By the time the weary traders arrived back in Missouri, they had lost 1,000 head of horses and mules, $30,000 worth of profits, several wagons full of supplies, and three men.

Such a disaster on the heretofore peaceful Santa Fe Trail caused an immediate outcry among Missouri citizens. Governor John Miller pointed an accusing finger at the federal government for failing to support the fledgling Santa Fe trade. The Missouri legislature called upon Congress to build a long-

Author's Collection

"Pilgrims of the Plains," an engraving by the noted artist A.R. Waud.

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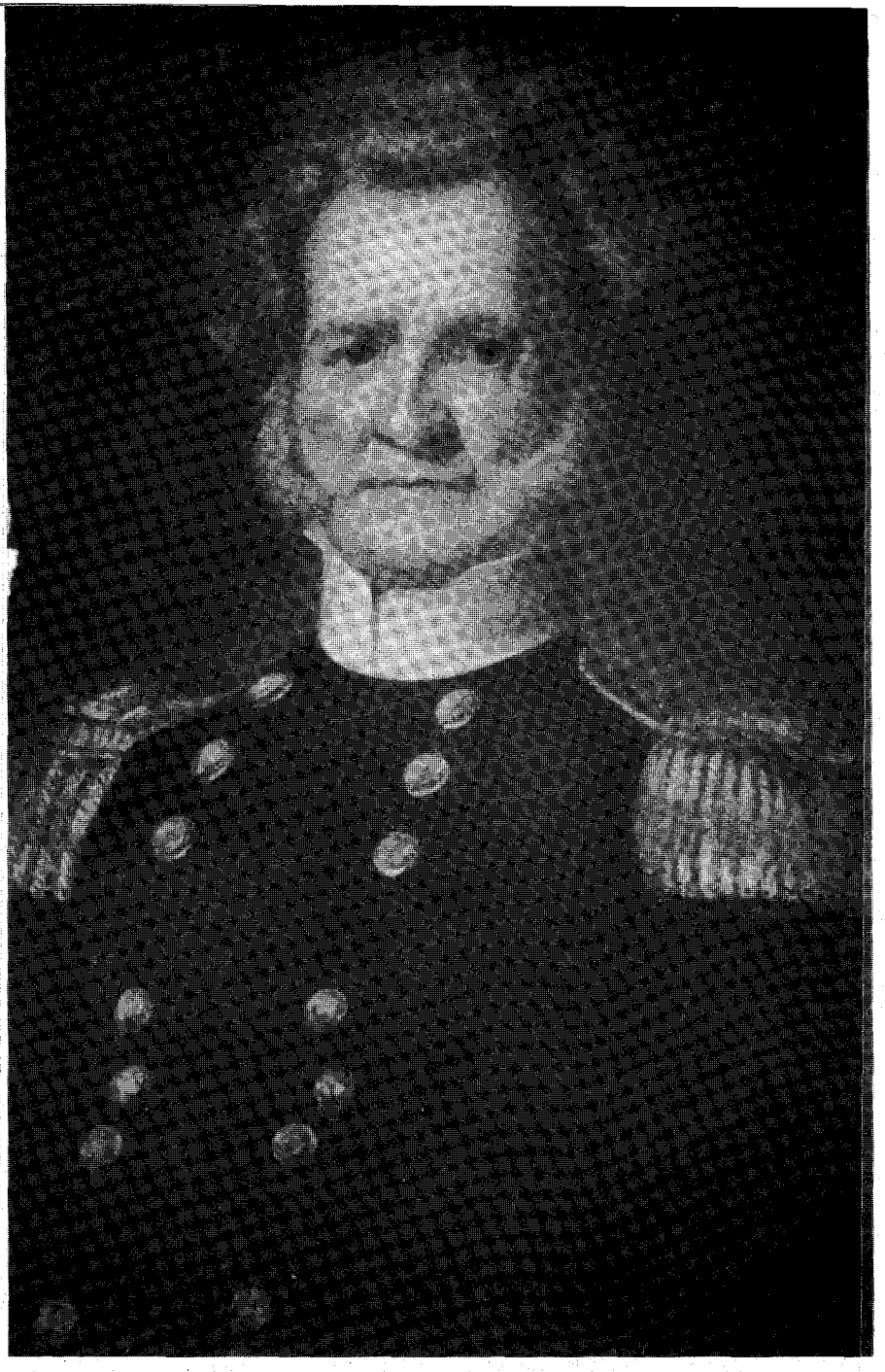
promised post at the Arkansas River crossing of the trail, and at the same time furnish military escorts for traders making the long trip. Missouri's first senator, Thomas Hart Benton, introduced a bill in the Senate that would have provided such protection, but it never got out of committee hearings.

Just when it appeared that no real help was coming out of Washington, DC, the Fayette, Missouri, newspaper of April 18, 1829, carried a front-page notice from Brevet Brigadier General Henry Atkinson that help was on the way. Major Bennet Riley, with 200 men of the Sixth Infantry, would be leaving Cantonment Leavenworth about June 1 with explicit orders to escort Missouri traders across the Santa Fe Trail as far as the border with Mexico. The detachment would wait there until the caravans returned in the fall and accompany them back to Missouri.

Riley and Companies A, B, F, and H of the Sixth Infantry arrived at Cantonment Leavenworth on May 15, 1829, aboard the steamboat *Diana*. The boat had made the trip up the Missouri River from Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, in ten days. A fifteen-gun salute met the boat and its passengers as it pulled up to the wharf. The officers and men now had less than a month to prepare for their assignment.



U.S. Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas

Bennet Riley.

RILEY AND HIS command left Leavenworth on June 4, and by June 11 they reached Round Grove, a few miles out in the Kansas prairie from Independence, where they caught up with a Santa Fe-bound trading party. Riley had with him a six-pounder, mule-drawn cannon and twenty-four loaded ox-drawn wagons and carts. His expedition marked the first time oxen were used on the Santa Fe Trail. Aside from protecting traders, one of Riley's most important contributions was proving that oxen could pull heavy loads across the trail, a relevant fact considering oxen were cheaper than mules.

Charles Bent, whose name would become indelibly linked with the Santa Fe Trail, captained the seventy-man wagon caravan that left Round Grove the next day, traveling behind the foot soldiers. In 1830 Bent and Ceran St. Vrain would form the Bent, St. Vrain Company. Along with Bent's younger brother, William, they would also build Bent's Fort on the north bank of the Arkansas River along the Santa Fe Trail.

On June 18 the party reached Council Grove, the last vestige of civilization on the Santa Fe Trail. Beyond, hostile Indians abounded and danger was prevalent. Council Grove also marked the last place travelers could cut hardwood for wagon axles. Consequently, Bent's caravan spent a day at the Grove making sure all of the vehicles were in good shape.

On June 20, the large group of soldiers and civilians left Council Grove and steered for the Upper Crossing of the Arkansas near Chouteau's Island. The trip during the next three weeks was uneventful, and on July 9 the party arrived at the Arkansas River, which divided the United States and Mexico. There Riley and his men had to stop. They would bivouac until October 10, the latest date agreed upon for the traders to rendezvous with Riley for the return to Missouri.

Bent's caravan crossed the river the next day and slowly headed south. The part of the trail they now traveled dissected a desert wilderness, where water was scarce. So frightening was the route that Mexican merchants called it the "journey of death." Indians liked to attack at the spot because weary travelers were frequently distracted from the surroundings while simply trying to survive the heat and drought.

Only a few miles separated the

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caravan from its escort when a band of Kiowas fell on the traders. One man was killed immediately and Bent ordered the wagons corralled and rifle pits dug. The traders swung their small cannon into action and Bent dispatched nine volunteers back to the Arkansas to fetch Riley and his men.

Although everyone clearly understood that Riley's escort was, under no circumstances, to cross the Arkansas River into Mexican territory, the messengers left the major with little choice. He quickly assembled his infantrymen and marched them double time to the rescue. He then escorted the traders' caravan through the rest of the desert before turning back to the American border on July 15.

Alone once again, the traders continued toward Santa Fe. Somewhere along the way, a party of 120 men led by Mexicans joined the Americans, but Indians still attacked the wagons in hit-and-run fashion. Ewing Young, a Tennessee-born trapper who operated out of Taos, heard about the train's predicament, recruited more than ninety fellow trappers from the area, and soon rendezvoused with the wagons. With the new reinforcements, the Americans safely completed their trip to Santa Fe.

In the meantime, Major Riley and his infantrymen established a camp along the north bank of the Arkansas River, near Chouteau's Island, to await the autumn return of Bent's caravan. On July 31, four soldiers in Riley's command whose enlistments were up started for home. Several miles east of camp Indians killed one of the men. A hunting party from Riley's encampment rescued the other three men later that day.

Author's Collection

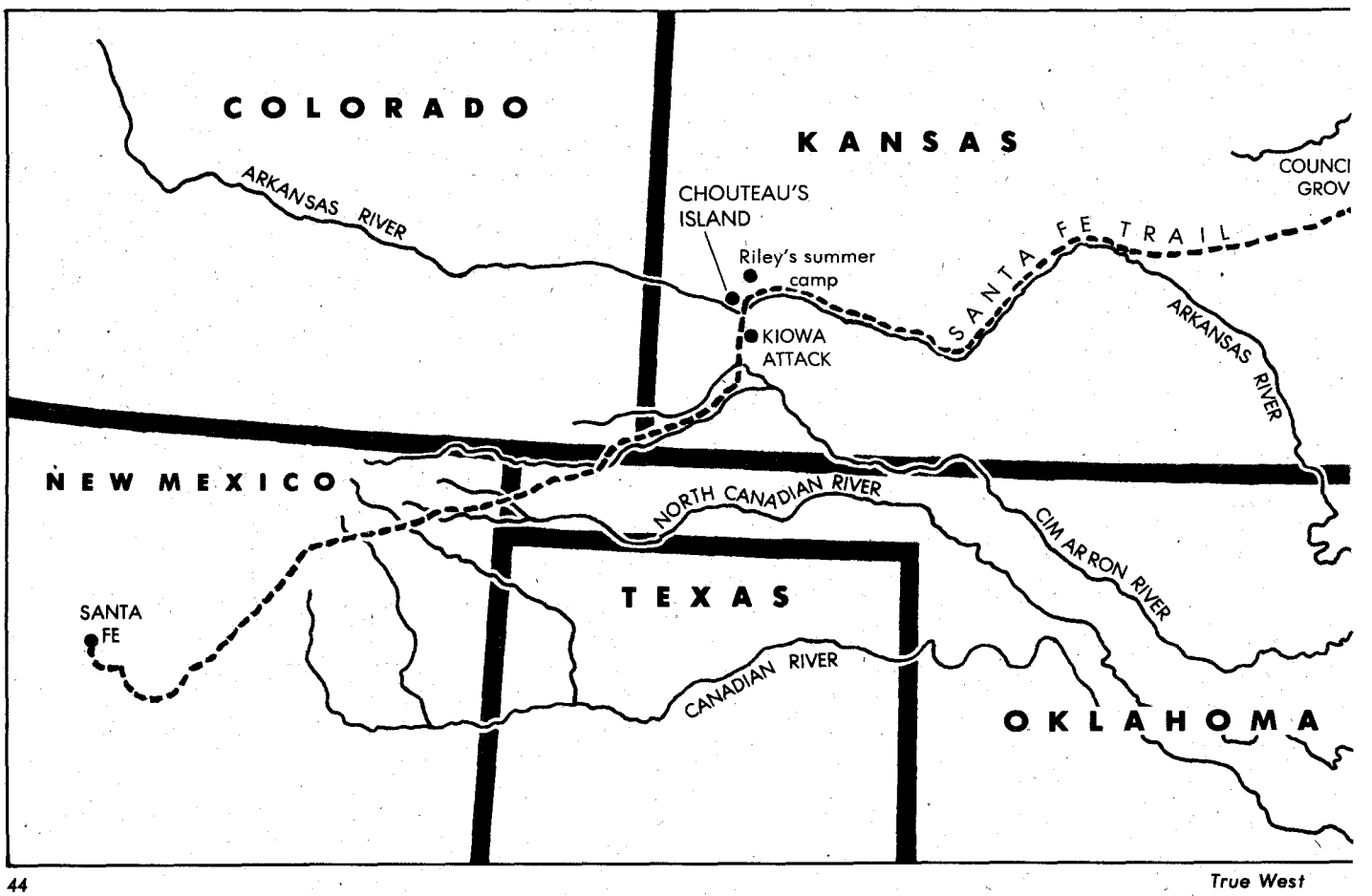
Charles Bent.

On August 3, from 300 to 400 Indians, supposedly Comanches and Kiowas, attacked Riley's camp. One soldier was killed while he was guarding the stock. Eight Indians were also killed in the forty-five-minute skirmish. Before they retreated, the Indians stole fifty oxen and twenty horses and mules and disabled several other animals.

THE CAMP was quiet until August 11 when a detail of men went out to get three buffaloes that hunters had killed earlier in the day. About 150 Indians surrounded the party; they shot and scalped the bugler before Riley could send a rescue party.

After those brief episodes, the Indians disappeared from the region and did not return as long as Riley's men were present. Nevertheless, they had shown Riley the futility of foot soldiers' trying to keep the peace among mounted Indians. In his official report, Riley wrote, "Think what our feelings must have been to see them going off with our cattle and horses, when if we had been mounted, we could have beaten them to pieces; but we were obliged to content ourselves with whipping them from our camp."

Late August and September passed slowly while the nervous infantrymen



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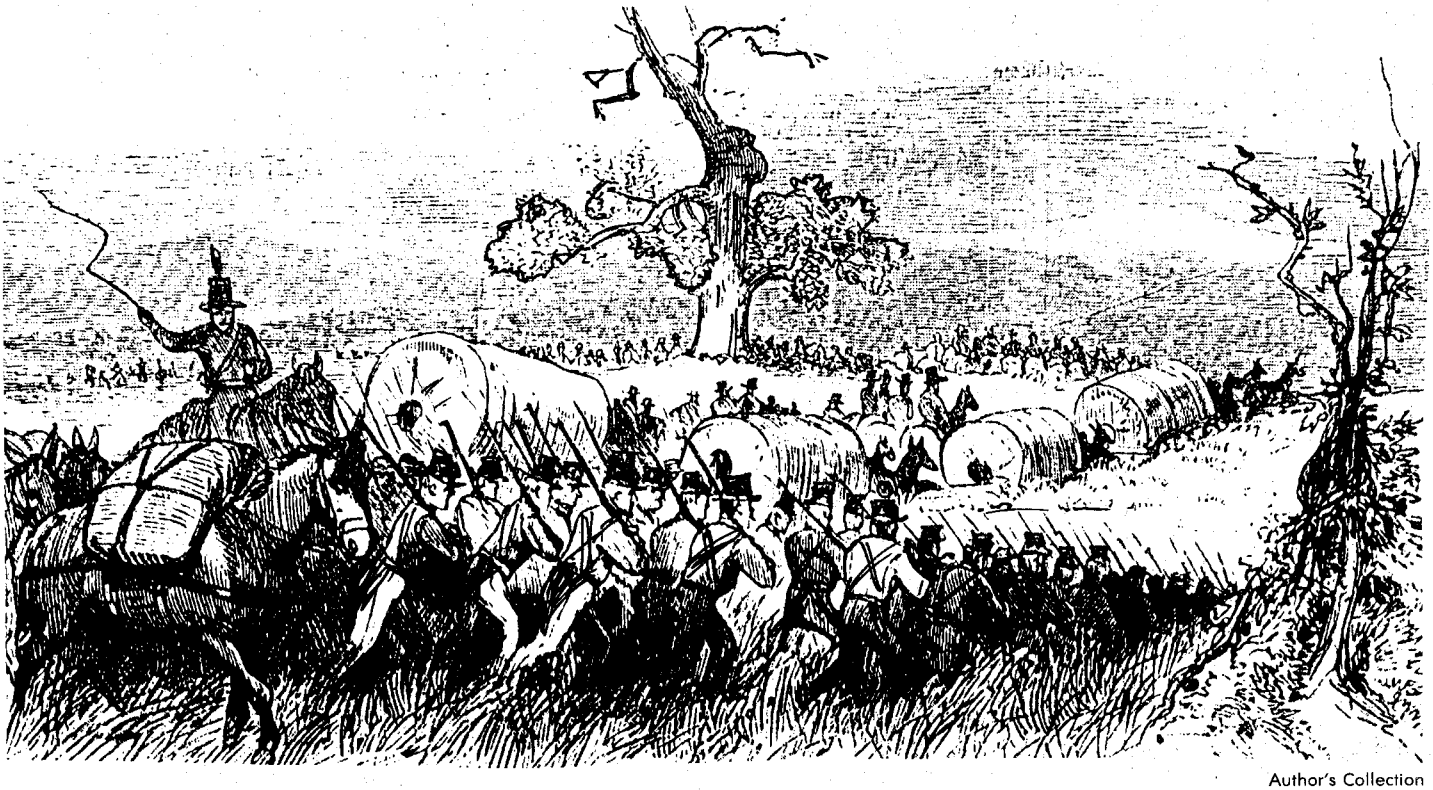
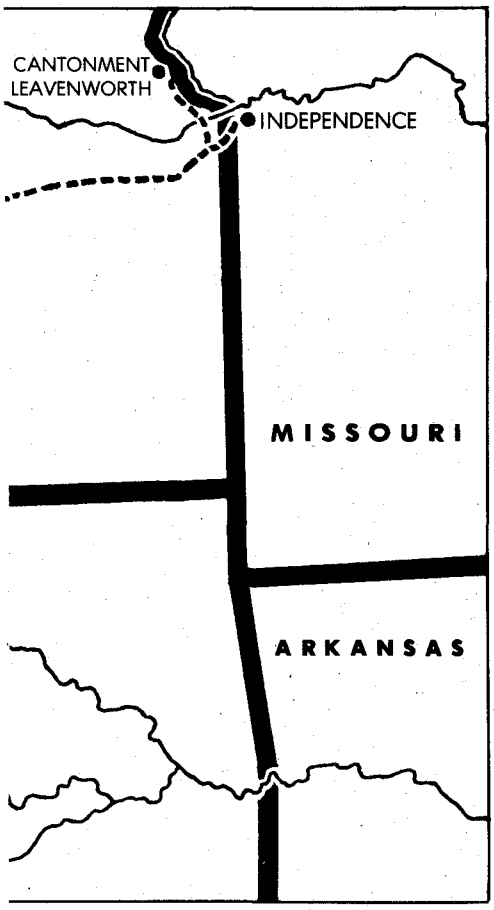


Author's Collection

An old engraving shows infantry escorting a wagon train.

hunted, tried to relax, or simply looked forward to being home. As October 10 approached, Riley's men prepared for the long march home.



The date arrived and the American traders were nowhere in sight. The next day Riley and his soldiers started for Cantonment Leavenworth. Unknown to Riley, the traders were only about twenty miles from the American border. They had left Santa Fe on September 1, and their caravan, in addition to the traders and about thirty wagons, included sixteen Spanish refugees; 2,000 horses, mules, and jackasses; and a party of 200 men—a mixture of Mexicans, Anglos, and Indians—who rode as escorts under the command of Colonel Jose Antonio Viscarra.

The traders, apprehensive that they had missed the rendezvous with the American soldiers, sent messengers ahead to locate Riley. He and his battalion had scarcely gone three miles when the messengers caught up with them. Halting the march, Riley waited until the next day when the caravan and its Mexican escort approached. Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke, one of Riley's officers, marveled at the odd gathering that took place along the Arkansas River. He later wrote that the assemblage "was the strangest collection of men and animals that had perhaps ever met on a frontier of the United States."

On October 14, the Missouri traders and Riley's escort left the Mexican soldiers behind and started for home. As they neared civilization, the traders and the escort party separated and went their own ways, the merchants to Missouri and Riley's men to Cantonment Leavenworth, where they arrived November 8—to another fifteen-gun salute.

Although there would be other army-escorted wagon trains on the Santa Fe Trail, for a few years after Riley's escort the army declined to offer traders its protection. The army reasoned that, as Riley had pointed out, infantrymen were no match for mounted Indians, and at that time, there was no comparable United States mounted force. Also, the region in which the escorts were allowed to travel was the safest part of the journey to Santa Fe; the real danger from Indians was usually on the Mexican side of the border, where American soldiers could not go.

The army's failure to offer further protection made the traders realize that, if their trains were to be protected, they would have to do it themselves. Accordingly, over the next few years, the personnel of wagon trains were organized into more disciplined and military-like units—ones that could render their own protection against marauding Indians.

The Santa Fe caravan of 1829 returned to Missouri laden with valuables. Although Indians threatened the train and the army escort, Major Riley's overwhelming dedication to the safety of the endeavor ensured its ultimate success.

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Defending the Bo

By MICHAEL W. JERRELLS

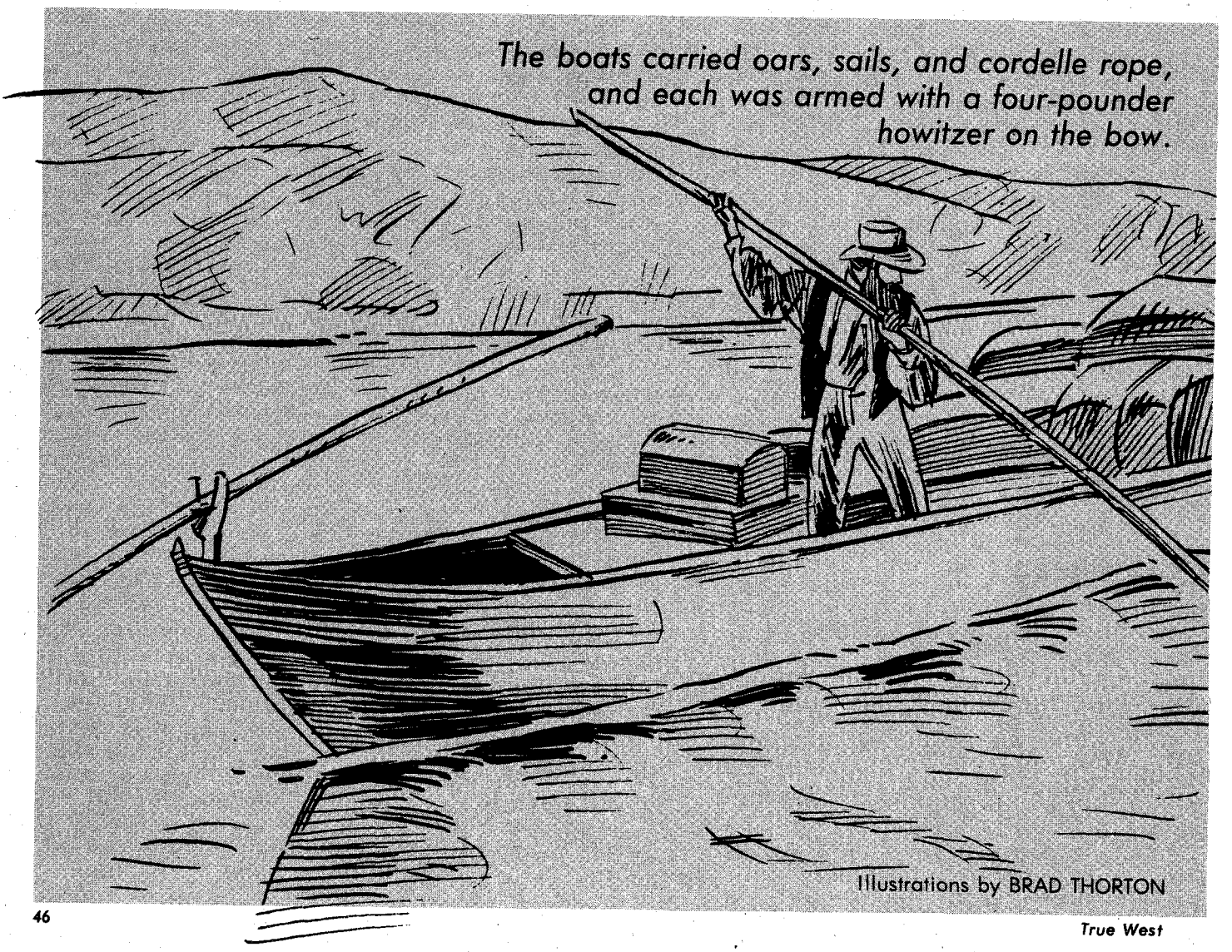
By 1818 the War of 1812 had been over three years, and although there was a formal peace with the British, there was none with the Missouri River Indian tribes who raided Missouri Territory settlements. No party of fur traders was safe from the depredations of the tribes of the upper Missouri, whom British traders reportedly armed, supplied, and agitated.

The government of the young United States, while slow to act, was not blind to the situation on its frontier. When the complaints of people on the Missouri frontier and working the fur trade reached Washington, DC, the government decided it had better act. As early as 1815, James Monroe, then secretary of war under President James Madison, proposed building a string of forts on the upper Mississippi all the way to the Canadian border. In 1816 William Clark, then governor of Missouri Territory and one of the co-leaders of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition, suggested building a post on the Platte River. The government turned a deaf ear to the suggestions and conditions went unchanged for two more years.

IN 1818, however, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun devised a solution to the problem. He planned to send a military expedition up the Missouri River to the mouth of the Yellowstone River and build a post there. A similar expedition would travel up the Mississippi and build a fort at the mouth of the Minnesota River. Calhoun and others in the government hoped that would end British influence over northern tribes, keep British traders out of American territory, and insure Indian trade with Americans.

By early March 1818, Calhoun decided that a post should be built at the Mandan Villages, where it would be more strategically located than at the mouth of the Yellowstone. An alternative plan called for the army to stop at Council Bluffs and build a secondary post if commanders thought they could not get to the Mandan Villages before winter.

When news of the plan hit Missouri Territory a spirit of optimism absent for years broke out. Western newspapers



The boats carried oars, sails, and cordelle rope, and each was armed with a four-pounder howitzer on the bow.

Illustrations by BRAD THORTON

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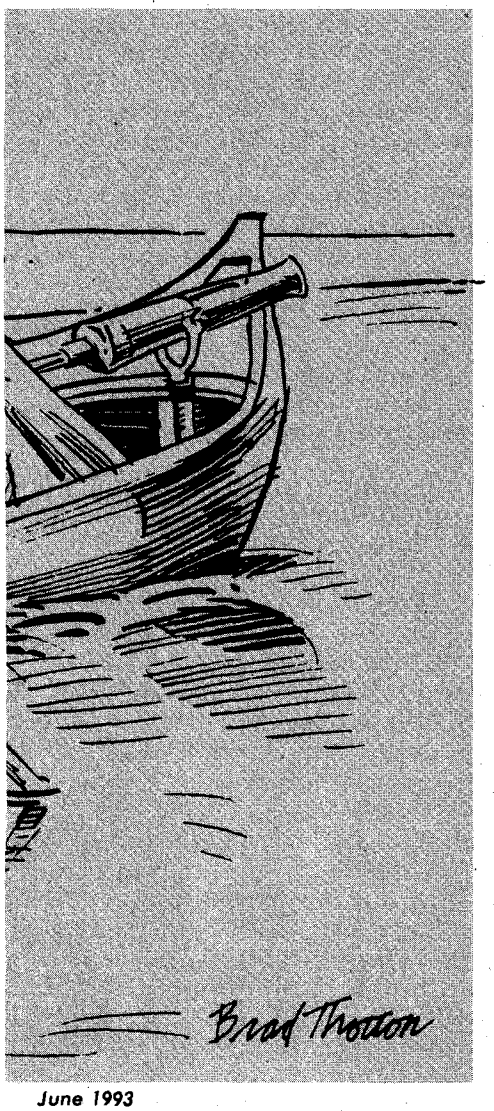
heralded the event as one of the most historic to date.

Calhoun wasted no time. On March 16, 1818, he sent orders to Colonel Thomas Smith of the Rifle Regiment quartered at Fort Belle Fontaine near the mouth of the Missouri. The orders were plain. Calhoun wanted a post built at the mouth of the Yellowstone, and if not there, then at the Mandan Villages. The domination of the north country by British traders had to cease. Calhoun left the logistics to Smith, and recommended he confer with William Clark about navigating the river, the nature of Indian tribes, and other details.

Smith readied his men for the journey and put Lieutenant Colonel Talbot Chambers in command of the advance party. They gathered at Fort Belle Fontaine, then a staging area for troops in western armies.

Martin finally sent sixty men to search for four hunters who had been absent several days, and ordered the soldiers to round up every Kansa warrior they could.



By early summer the troops were ready to go but the supplies and ordnance were not. Colonel James Johnson of Kentucky was awarded the contract to supply the Missouri expedition, but unexpected delays kept the advance party from getting an early start. Finally, on August 30, 1818, enough provisions and ordnance had arrived to last a month. Johnson promised that the rest of the supplies would follow them upriver; then the decision was made to begin.

Chambers and 350 men left Fort Belle Fontaine and transported their supplies and ordnance up the Missouri in seven keelboats. With them went a boat bound for Fort Osage, farther up the Missouri, and a sutler's boat. The boats carried oars, sails, and cordelle rope (which men on the banks used to pull the boats through low water), and each was armed with a four-pounder howitzer on the bow; in all, each boat carried an estimated thirty-five tons. Each also had a commissioned officer to watch over the vessel while in motion. The expedition made four miles the first day before stopping.

Chambers left the expedition on September 2 and put Captain Wyly Martin in command. Chambers went back to Fort Belle Fontaine, doubtless to get ready for troops coming from the east to join the expedition the next year.

The expedition had hard luck from the start. The flotilla made good time and arrived at Fort Osage by October 5, but eight men had deserted from the expedition and many more had deserted from the sutler's boat. One of the trip's most shocking statistics was that ten men would be killed or wounded in gun accidents before expedition's end; two such incidents had occurred by the time the party reached Fort Osage. The expedition stayed there two days to rest and refit.

By October 8, the flotilla was once again headed upriver. Hunters found game plentiful and brought in deer, turkey, geese, and other waterfowl. Ten days after leaving Fort Osage, the expedition arrived at its winter quarters on Cow Island just a few miles upriver from present-day Leavenworth, Kansas. The island offered suitable timber to build a post and a harbor in which to protect the keelboats. By the time the party arrived at the island, it had averaged seven and three-fifths miles per day.

Captain Martin quickly put the men to felling trees for winter barracks; the men named the new camp Cantonment Martin. A party of Kansa Indians soon began to plague the expedition, stealing camp equipment and meat and firing on boats traveling upriver. Martin finally sent sixty men to search for four hunters who had been absent several days, and ordered the soldiers to round up every Kansa warrior they could and bring them in. Late in the day, the search party found the four hunters safe. The hunters reported seeing several Kansa warriors fleeing up the river, but the search party returned to camp.

Lieutenant Gabriel Fields led an expedition out of camp on November 21 and was able to surprise a camp of Kansa Indians. They captured eight of them and took them back to the barracks in irons. A trial was held two days

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later, and five of the Indians, who were known to have participated in plundering the expedition's stores, were found guilty. They were whipped, told to mend their ways, and released. Back in their camps, the Indians' own chiefs also punished them.

Expedition members built an enclosure for their keelboats, and passed the winter at Cantonment Martin by hunting, exploring, and drilling. When spring came, Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Morgan, second in command of the Rifle Regiment, arrived to take command of the post.

In Washington, DC, more plans had been made for the Missouri expedition. A scientific corps commanded by Major Stephen H. Long was added to the military wing, and Calhoun named Colonel Henry Atkinson as overall commander of the expedition. Troops were also called up from Plattsburg Barracks in New York; Philadelphia; and Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, to raise the main force to 1,000 men.

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The eastern troops boarded keelboats at Pittsburgh and by June 8 were at Fort Belle Fontaine waiting to start up the Missouri. Atkinson, who was also named commander of the Ninth Military Department, congratulated the men on a successful trip thus far and informed them their next destination would be Council Bluffs, high up the Missouri River.

Bad luck again appeared. Johnson, the expedition's contractor, was behind on transporting ordnance and supplies from Pittsburgh to St. Louis. Johnson was also to furnish steamboats for transporting troops and supplies up the Missouri; they were two months late arriving. While waiting for his stores, Atkinson sent Chambers, who had become a colonel, with 260 men of the rifle regiment and five keelboats ahead of the main party. They reached Fort Osage on July 20, then waited for the main body of troops to arrive.

When Atkinson finally received enough supplies to last five months, he set out from Fort Belle Fontaine on three steamboats and four keelboats on July 4 and 5. From the start the steamboats created problems. They ran aground on sandbars, sprouted leaks in their hulls, and experienced engine failure. Only one of the three made it as far as Cantonment Martin, and that one had to stop there because of low water. The other two steamboats, which broke down, offloaded their supplies and men onto keelboats. Slowly, the crippled expedition made its way upriver. The Missouri, never an easy river to navigate, showed them no mercy. The troops at Cantonment Martin, running desperately short of food, searched up and down the Missouri hunting for food.

MEANWHILE, Atkinson and Quartermaster General Thomas Jesup rode horseback along the west bank of the river. They grew impatient and forged ahead of the slow moving boats, arriving at Franklin, Missouri, 180 miles from St. Louis, on July 26. They remained there until August 13, when they left for Fort Osage. Staying only briefly, Atkinson continued on his way and arrived at Cantonment Martin on August 31—exactly one year after the advance party had left Fort Belle Fontaine.

Atkinson took command of all the troops in the field. Now both the First and Second battalions of the Rifle Regiment were at the cantonment, the Second having arrived from Fort Osage on August 30 with elements of the Sixth Infantry.

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On September 26 the expedition passed the mouth of the Platte, which was 600 yards wide at its junction with the Missouri. The men would reach Council Bluffs within the week.

On September 2, Atkinson and his junior officers made plans for the final leg of the journey to Council Bluffs. They would use sixteen keelboats to make the trip. On September 5, at 12:30 p.m., the troops boarded the boats. The farsighted Atkinson put squads of riflemen along the riverbank to guard against surprise attacks from hostile Indians.

THE EXPEDITION went smoothly, with only minor incidents along the way. One boat struck a log and had to stop for repairs. One serious incident happened, however, when one of the troops accidentally shot himself, inflicting a mortal wound. Atkinson, well aware of how many people had already been hurt by gun accidents, moved quickly to prevent any more. He issued orders which essentially said that no firearms could be discharged in camp or within 400 yards of camp in any direction. The order also applied to river travel.

On September 26 the expedition passed the mouth of the Platte, which was 600 yards wide at its junction with the Missouri. The men would reach Council Bluffs within the week.

September 29 found them at their destination and looking for a suitable campsite. Major Long and his scientific corps were already there and working on a cantonment of their own to be called Engineer Cantonment. Long and his corps had made it all the way to Council Bluffs in their steamboat, *Western Engineer*.

Three miles upriver from Council Bluffs, Atkinson found a spot for a post in a cottonwood thicket on the west bank of the river. By October 4, the men were cutting timber for the new post to be called Cantonment Missouri. Hunting parties went out to scour the countryside for fresh game, while other details gathered rock for chimneys and building foundations. When Cantonment Missouri was finished, it consisted of officers' billets, barracks, storage sheds, an ordnance magazine, and a hospital. The pickets were sixteen feet tall and looped with rifle ports for easy firing at an attacking force. The walls, which were 520 feet square, had watch towers mounted with three cannon apiece. In all, it was a strong solid fort and had the distinction of being the westernmost of any American military fort. In a letter Atkinson wrote to Calhoun on October 9, 1819, he said that "when completed, no force will be able to carry the work without the aid of cannon."

Atkinson, while overseeing the building of Cantonment Missouri, also met with three bands of Pawnee Indians. The Pawnees had robbed a Major Biddle and eight other gentlemen of their horses and camp equipment while traveling to Council Bluffs. The Pawnees promised to return the stolen articles and discipline the guilty parties.

On October 30, Lieutenant John Clarke arrived at Cantonment Missouri with four boats in his flotilla. Clarke had been left in command of Cantonment Martin, but had orders to abandon that post when Cantonment Missouri was started. Three days later Atkinson and several of his officers left for St. Louis, leaving Lieutenant Colonel Morgan in command of Cantonment Missouri. Once Atkinson reach St. Louis, he wrote a progress report of the expedition to Calhoun and began preparing future plans for the continuation of the Missouri expedition the next year. Little could Atkinson know that the expedition would go no farther.

Life at Cantonment Missouri went on much like that at Cantonment Martin the year before. Parties went hunting and exploring the country around the fort while troops drilled on the parade ground. Bad luck again descended on the men, this time in the form of scurvy. By February 29, 1820, 286 men were sick, most of them with the disease. A diet of putrid meat, bad flour, and few vegetables was the suspected cause of the malady. By April 1, 1820, 160 men had died. The rest of the ailing men were taken downriver to Fort Osage to recover.

THINGS CONTINUED to degenerate for the expedition. In the winter of 1819, Congress, facing a crippling depression, cut appropriations for the expedition, thus halting all future plans, much to Calhoun's disgust.

A surprise awaited Atkinson and his officers when they returned to Cantonment Missouri in June 1820. The mighty Missouri had flooded, washing away the barracks facing the river and forcing the abandonment of the post. By July 6, however, Atkinson had his men at work on a new fort farther from the river and out of danger of floodwaters.

To Congress' perception, the Missouri expedition had turned into a fiasco, but other, more farsighted, men knew better. Some good things had indeed come from the expedition. The western military post would, in the future, be able to influence Missouri River tribes, and the British could now see that the United States intended to protect its fur interests in the north country. The expedition was far from the failure that Congress had dubbed it.

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Eugene Van Patten during his days as sheriff of Dona Ana County, New Mexico.

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By KATHERINE DURACK

The year was 1857, and sixteen-year-old Eugene Van Patten headed west from Rome, New York to drive the Butterfield stage. Four years later he was among the Mesilla, New Mexico, residents mustered into the Confederate Army after the Battle of Fort Fillmore. Throughout the 1870s and '80s, Eugene Van Patten fought rustlers, outlaws, and Indians as sheriff of Dona Ana county and as a major, then colonel, of the local militia.

After nearly forty years out west, in 1893 Eugene Van Patten found himself on a homestead in the Organ Mountains fourteen miles outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico. He was fifty-two years old, and he planned to build a luxurious mountain resort and perhaps to settle down a bit. Little did he know that his homestead would entangle him in the longest battle of his life: legal grappling over the property's ownership which would be settled long after the turn of the century and a decision from the United States secretary of the interior.

Presumably the trouble began with a gentleman's agreement between Van Patten and Dr. Nathan Boyd, a relative newcomer to the Mesilla Valley. Dr. Boyd apparently admired the location of Van Patten's ranch and resort and determined that it would be an ideal spot for a sanitorium. In 1904 the medical community believed dry, cool mountain air was the ideal cure for respiratory ailments such as tuberculosis. After about a month at the resort, Boyd convinced Van Patten to allow him to establish a camp not far from the resort. Van Patten followed the verbal agreement with a June 30, 1904, letter confirming the details.

Dear Sir:

Confirming my verbal promise to you and in consideration of the expense you have incurred in establishing your camp on my property as above, and of the advantage I will directly

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e Van Patten: Longest Battle

and indirectly derive therefrom (which renders my ranch more attractive as a health and summer resort), I hereby formally agree that I will not without your consent in writing permit anyone to put up a tent or tents, or to build on or in, or otherwise to use for camping purposes or otherwise any part of the canyon on my ranch as aforesaid in which you have established your camp; and I further agree that for the sum of twenty five ($25.00) a year rent, payable the first day of June in each year, the first year's rental of twenty five dollars ($25.00), for the year ending on the 30th day of April, 1905, receipt whereof I hereby acknowledge, you shall be at liberty to occupy, use and utilize for the purposes of your camp so much of the said canyon as you may wish to use and utilize for yourself and party present and future and for the use of others to whom you may sell or rent one or more of the tents now erected or to be erected hereafter in said canyon; provided always that you (Nor any member of your party present or future) do not cater for or provide table board for the members of your party, or for others, so long as I provide suitable table board for you and your party at the price agreed upon; it being mutually understood and agreed that for the sum of eleven dollars ($11.00) a week for each adult (children half price), I shall and will provide a reasonably good table (including plenty of fresh milk, fresh eggs, fresh butter, fresh meat, and, when in season, plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit) and service (including care of tents, etc., etc.,), and an adequate supply of good water (delivered at your tents, viz., the tents belonging to you and your party present and future) for the members of your party.

This agreement is to be in effect five years (5) from the first of May last.

It is furthermore agreed in the event of my failing to provide suitable table board and service as above for you and for the members of your party, you shall be at liberty to provide your own table board and service and in such event I shall have no claim upon you or upon the members of your party who may elect to provide their own table board and service so long as you pay to me or to my nominee or agent the yearly rental of twenty five dollars ($25.00) for exclusive use of the said canyon; and your right to take sufficient water from my springs and reservoirs for the purposes of your camp (and horses) shall remain unimpaired. It being understood and mutually agreed that any difference arising as to what constitutes suitable board shall be left to arbitration in the usual manner of arbitrations.

(signed) Eugene Van Patten

All seemed to be in order, and together the two men continued building the structures needed for

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Dr. Nathan Boyd and family. Dr. Boyd (center) is surrounded by the women in his life: his wife (near right), his daughter (near left), his future daughter-in-law (far right), and her sister (far left).

Eugene Van Patten was fifty-two years old, and he planned to build a mountain resort and perhaps settle down a bit. Little did he know that his homestead would entangle him in the longest battle of his life: legal grappling over the property's ownership which would be settled long after the turn of the century.

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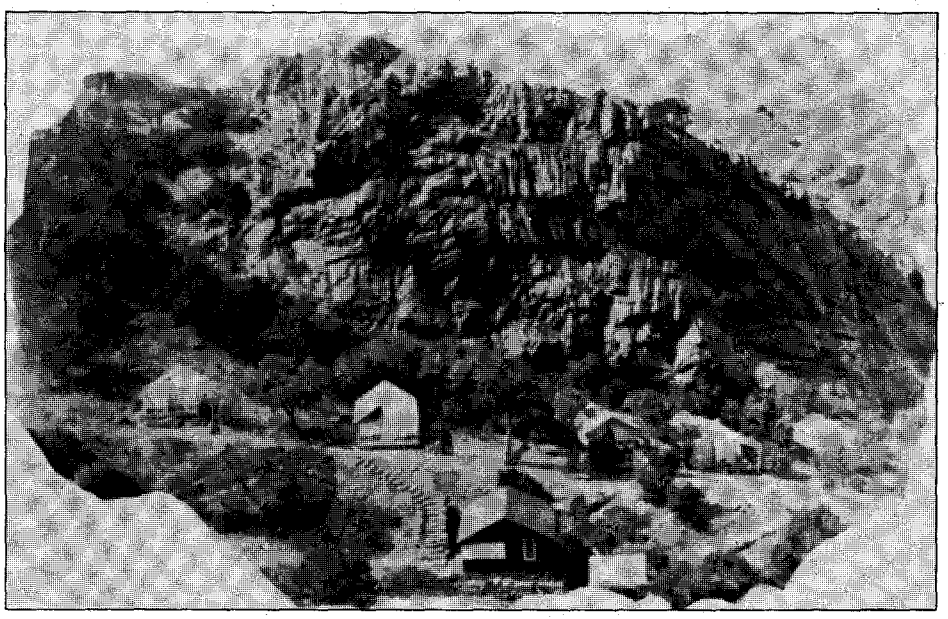

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Tents at Boyd's sanitorium. This photo has been reproduced from a photo which was published in the 1907 *Swastika*, the New Mexico State University yearbook.

Boyd's camp: a home for his family and platforms to accommodate tents. Less than five months later the trouble began.

Somehow, Nathan Boyd discovered that the property description for Van Patten's patent did not match the area Van Patten claimed. In fact, the patent included neither the resort nor Boyd's camp. Anxious to obtain the property, on November 22, 1904, Nathan Boyd made application in the United States land office in Las Cruces for the canyon area. Alerted to Boyd's action and the error in his patent, Van Patten filed an amendment to his patent four days later. The battle had been joined.

LEGAL ownership of the property was a matter to be decided by the United States land office; the matter of rent and reimbursement for monies spent building the sanitorium was another issue. Van Patten incurred many expenses during construction. His records show costs for carpenters, labor, freight, and for "26 heavy posts" to build the sanitorium. Boyd and his wife also stayed at the resort for some months during construction. In fact, before the dispute, Van Patten had spent more than $800 to establish Boyd's camp. Over the next year, Boyd repaid less than half, leaving Van Patten holding a balance of $454.20, a tidy sum in those days.

When a year had passed since Boyd's last payment, Van Patten filed suit in the Dona Ana County district court on September 21, 1905, in an effort to recoup his expenses. At the same time, Van Patten filed suit against John Simmers, an associate of Boyd's who also boarded at the resort during the months the sanitorium was under construction. Boyd denied his debt and tried to assume the debt claimed against Simmers. He successfully delayed the cases, pending final decision on the property's ownership: though the land office in Las Cruces had sided with Van Patten, Boyd appealed first to the commissioner of the general land office of the United States and then to the secretary of the interior.

The Las Cruces *Citizen* announced the final decision on March 6, 1906:

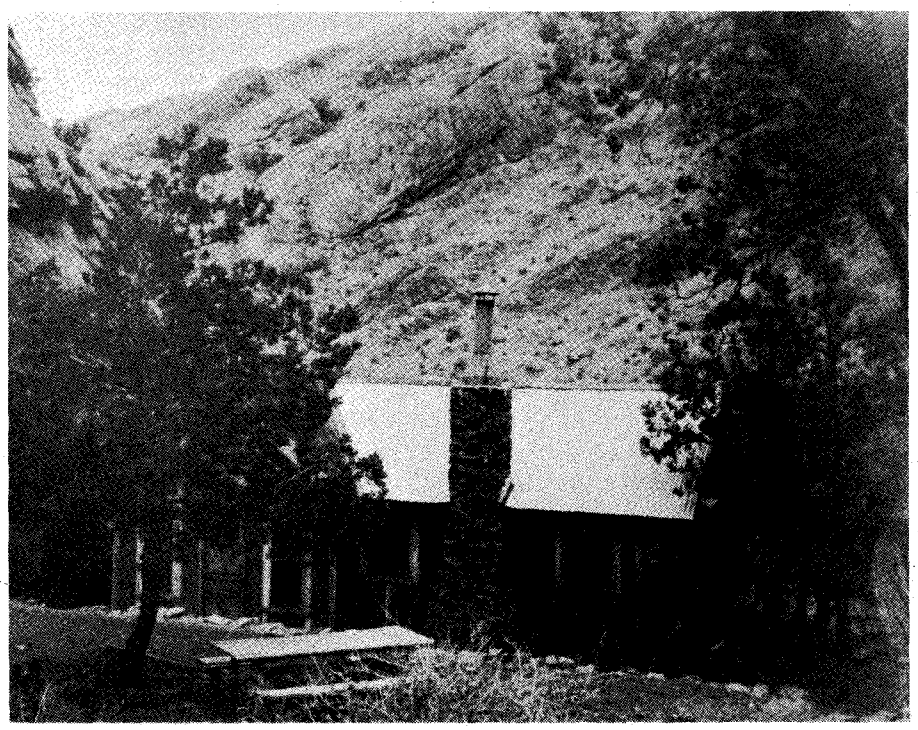
Mayor [sic] Van Patten Gets the Decision

The secretary of the interior at Washington, D.C., has made the final decision in the hotly contested and famous land case involving the well known Dripping Springs ranch in the Mesilla Valley of New Mexico.

Twelve years ago, Major Eugene Van Patten, register of the land office at Las Cruces, homesteaded a piece of land in the Organ mountains, and immediately after filing, started the construction of his now well known Dripping Springs ranch, which is the local summer resort for Las Cruces people.

After expending over $15,000 on buildings and equipment, the major found that he had given the wrong technical description to the land, and, while he had a homestead, it was not the land on which he had put his buildings.

Dr. Nathan Boyd, well known by reason of his connection with the original Elephant Butte dam, had



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The Boyd family home near Van Patten's Mountain Camp.

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settled on a part of the land which Major Van Patten thought was covered by his description.

The Secretary, as a court of last resort, has finally decided in favor of the major.

Boyd, however, clung tenaciously to his claim. He refused to turn the property over to Van Patten and appealed yet again to the land office and the secretary of the interior.

On September 16, 1909, Van Patten sought assistance from the district court to eject Boyd from the property. Despite the secretary of the interior's 1906 decision, Boyd's continued appeals to the land office again delayed the proceedings. Boyd's efforts were for naught: the decision in favor of Van Patten was unappealably reaffirmed on July 16, 1909. Boyd still refused to budge.

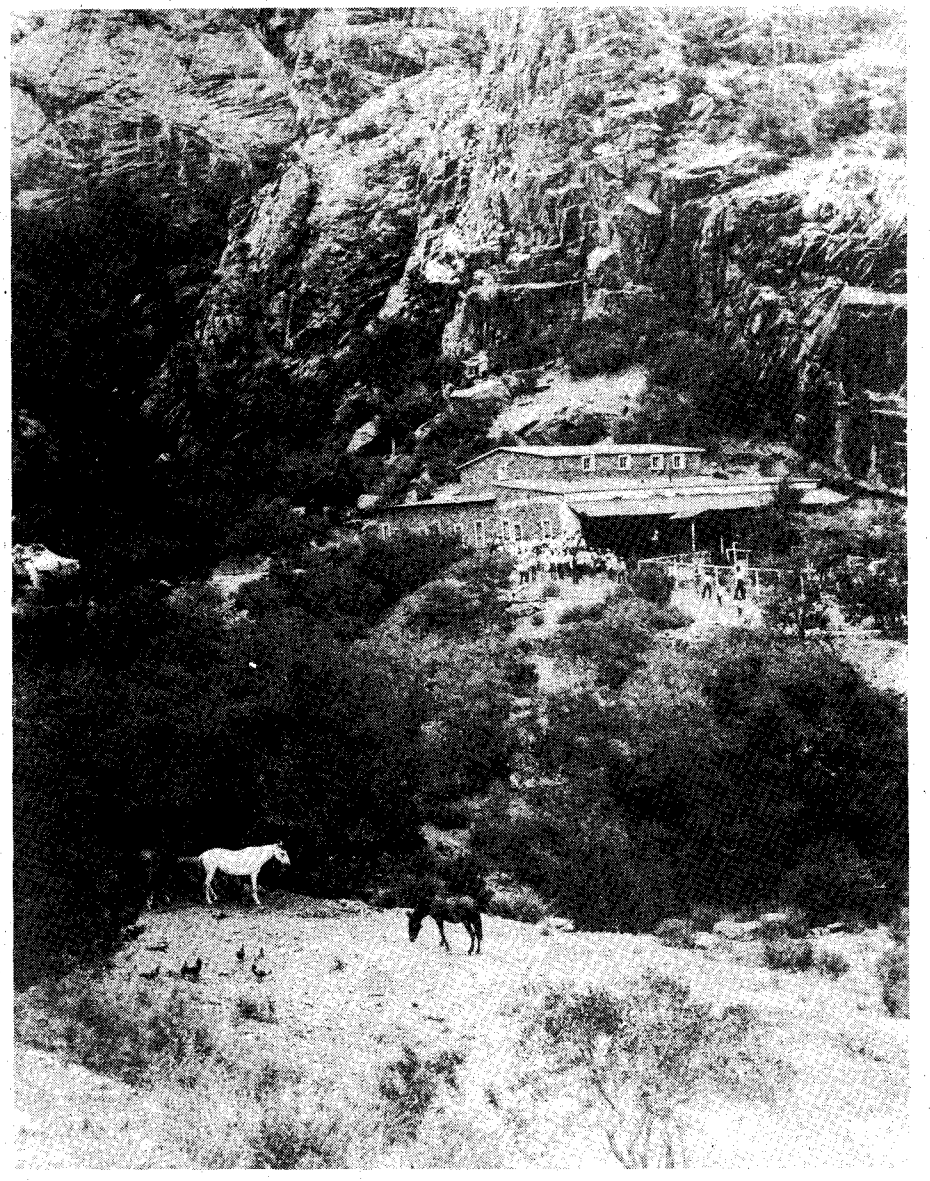
IN THE MEANTIME, Van Patten had been having other financial problems. Action was brought against him in 1908 by the May Brothers in Las Cruces for goods sold and delivered in 1904, during the several months immediately preceding and during the period the sanitorium was being built. The judgment went against Van Patten, and the county sheriff collected the debt plus damages in the amount of $207.80 on May 8, 1910.

Though records of the civil case to eject Boyd from the property show little activity between November 1909 and February 1912, the matter was far from settled. With regard to Van Patten's claim that Boyd owed him for expenses related to establishing the sanitorium, the Dona Ana District Court found in favor of Van Patten in October 1910. They determined that Boyd was indeed indebted to Van Patten to the tune of $358.20 plus interest (an amount reduced somewhat from the $454.20 Van Patten claimed). Judging from the records, it appears that Boyd delayed payment despite the court's ruling.

Van Patten must have been frustrated by his attempts to recover his property and his financial losses. So in July 1910, he tried another tactic. Boyd had been using water from the single source, a dripping spring, in the canyon. The quantity of water the spring provided fluctuated widely according to the rainfall in the area, and Van Patten argued that Boyd's use of the waters for his camp was illegal (as Van Patten was the legal property owner) and that it jeopardized Van Patten's own water supply. Van Patten once again sought justice through the courts, this time requesting $500 in damages for Boyd's prior use of the water. He further asked that Boyd be prohibited from continued use of the spring water. Yet another time, Boyd delayed the proceedings by citing the ownership dispute (which was then tied up in district court). More than once, the courts ordered Boyd to discontinue using the spring waters; more than once Boyd refused.

Though Van Patten continued to win in the courtroom, Boyd continued to stall or to appeal. In April 1915, eleven years after the "gentlemen's agreement," the central issue—ownership of the property—was heard by the New Mexico supreme court. Consistent with all of the other appeals, the supreme court affirmed Van Patten's ownership and denied Boyd's request for yet another rehearing of the case.

Sadly, the story still did not end. Though the court awarded Van Patten



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Van Patten's Mountain Camp, date unknown—possibly near the turn of the century.

Somehow, Boyd discovered that the property description for Van Patten's patent did not match the area Van Patten claimed. In fact, the patent included neither the resort nor Boyd's camp. Anxious to obtain the property, on November 22, 1904, Nathan Boyd made application in the land office in Las Cruces for the canyon area.

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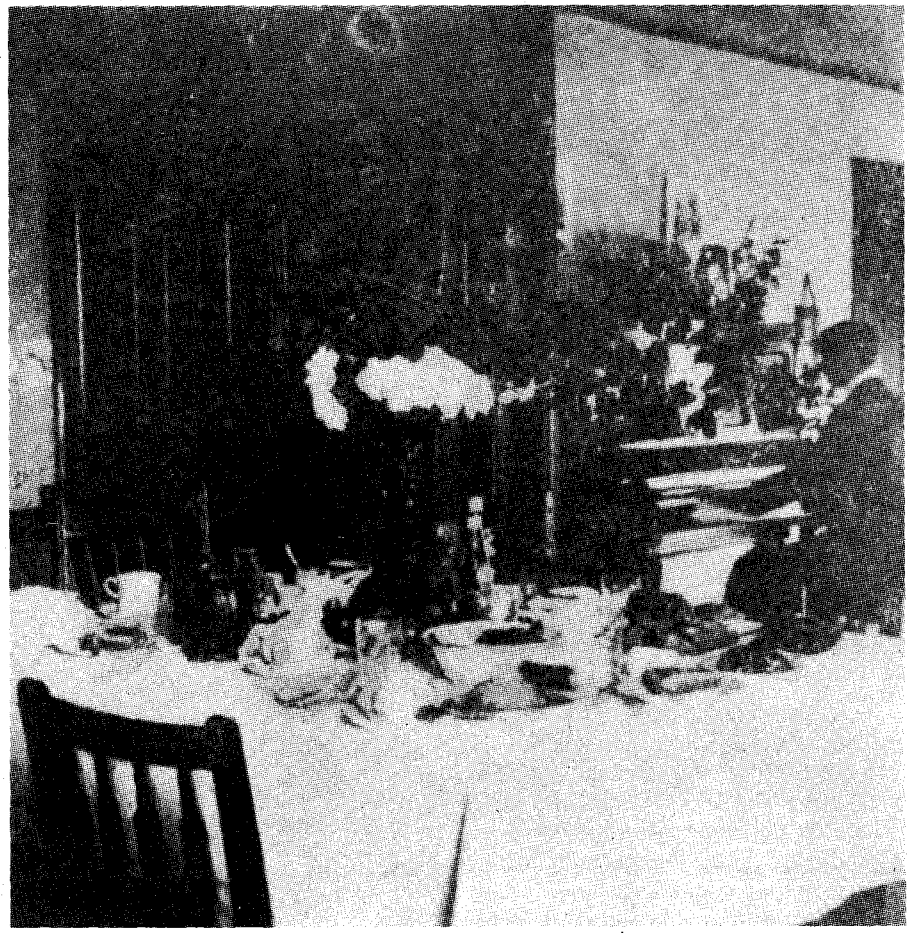

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This is the only known photo depicting the interior of Van Patten's Mountain Camp. Note the fine table linens and china, and the piano and pianist in the background.

various sums of money for each of the cases (together totaling well over $1,000), it appears that he had difficulty collecting the funds. Van Patten attempted to garnish Boyd's funds when Boyd and several partners opened a new bank in Las Cruces, also in April 1915. The court granted the writ of garnishment, but the sheriff returned with dismal news: despite Boyd's partnership in the bank, he held but a single share valued at $100.

The last entry recorded among the cases appears February 28, 1917. On that date, "full satisfaction" of Boyd's and Simmers' debts to Van Patten was recorded. Boyd finally paid only $100 against the original judgment of $300. Simmers also paid $100, less than half the $250 due.

THAT SAME DAY, Eugene Van Patten filed a quitclaim deed releasing the property for which both men had battled so long and hard, to Nathan Boyd for the sum of one dollar. Though he had won the battles, Van Patten lost the war. He died February 28, 1926, in the care of his only daughter, Emilia Ascarate.

The *Las Cruces Citizen* paid tribute to Van Patten with a front-page obituary on March 6:

Pioneer and Indian Fighter Dies in His Las Cruces Home

In the passing to a better life, of Col. Eugene Van Patten, the people of New Mexico lose one of its noblest and most famous characters. His life was such that the heritage he leaves is one that cannot be estimated, because it is most worthy and enduring. He led a simple, exemplary life, always ready and willing to help those in need in his quiet, unassuming way. . . .

Born in Rome, N.Y. . . . he inherited from his father, Adam Van Patten, the sterling qualities of the old New Amsterdam Dutch stock, and from his mother, Nancy Adams, the fighting qualities and love of justice and fair play for which all New England Adams' were so justly famous.

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Photos of the Past

Old Indian Trails, by Walter McKlintock. (Houghton, Mifflin Company, Two Park Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108. $12.95 paper bound.)

Like Charles Lummis and Frank Cushing in the Southwest, Walter McKlintock grew to know Indians very well by living with them. But his hosts were of the Southern Piegan band of the Blackfoot tribe. A chief named Mad Wolf adopted McKlintock. Mad Wolf was a wise man. Instead of resenting the outsider's intense interest in legends, songs, and rituals, he encouraged McKlintock to record them not only with his pen, but also with his camera, as the people were dangerously close to extinction.

Forty of the author's photos, from Yale's Beinecke Library of Western Americana, are reproduced here, and pretty well, though on ordinary paperback stock. They are in the soft-focus style of the period, but more interesting (being more candid) than posed and heavily romanticized images.

Yale graduate McKlintock went west in 1896 and got an entrée to the Blackfoot tribe via a half-blood guide. He developed into not only a good friend of the Indians, but a good amateur ethnologist as well. William Least Heat Moon, who contributes a foreword, considers this work to be better than the well-known but somewhat fictionalized *My Life as an Indian* by James Willard Schultz. McKlintock's is a first-person narrative of travels and hunts, not fictionalized, but with totally recalled conversations that must be suspect. This book is an expanded and completely revised version of the author's 1910 *The Old North Trail.—Richard H. Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

Classic Battle Retold

The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867–1869, by John H. Monnett. (University Press of Colorado, PO Box 849, Niwot, Colorado 80544. $22.50 cloth bound.)

The Beecher Island fight in September 1868 has achieved legendary status among stories of the American West. The drama of Colonel George Forsyth's fifty-one scouts fighting off starvation and Indian attacks while pinned down on an island in a dry river bed, then rescued by cavalry after a nine-day siege, was perfectly suited for the popular history of the day, as well as "dime novel" exploitation.

Many serious historians have become bogged down in the minutiae of the fight, such as who killed Roman Nose and whose idea it was to make a stand on the island. However, no one has placed the Beecher Island battle in the larger context of the situation on the borders of Indian territory after the Civil War. Monnett's book admirably fills that gap.

His history is unique in that it traces the roots of the Beecher Island fight back to General Winfield Scott Hancock's campaign in 1867; instead of pacifying Indians, it only stirred up hostility among Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Sioux. The Indians began to raid heavily in western Kansas, an area with far too few men to adequately defend settlements, stagecoaches, and advancing railroads. Enter Brevet Colonel Forsyth and his volunteer scouts. Monnett's diligent research serves him well as he describes the gathering of the troop, the personalities of the scouts, and the friendships they formed among themselves.

Monnett tells the story of the battle well. While he does not provide us with new and astounding discoveries about the fight, he does the best job yet in pulling together all the different accounts into one coherent whole. Several of the scouts left personal accounts of the battle, and those versions (along with the Indian accounts, for which Monnett relies on George Bird Grinnell's Cheyenne histories) are occasionally contradictory. Monnett manages to weave all the versions into an organized pattern, while helpfully pointing out the "knots" along the way.

More important than the causes of the Beecher Island fight were its effects. The story spread eastward like wildfire, effectively ending the treaties of Medicine Lodge. It had a detrimental effect on efforts to keep the Indian bureau from the jurisdiction of the War Department. It also put an end to the tactic of employing "rangers" to dog and harass Indian raiders. Unfortunately, the new tactic the army chose—sending a large

Also Worth Noting . . .

Dallas Stoudenmire, El Paso Marshal, by Leon C. Metz. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1005 Asp Avenue, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-0445. $9.95 paper bound.)

A reprint of Metz's 1969 classic about the west Texas lawman.

Six Years with the Texas Rangers, 1875 to 1881, by James B. Gillett. (Heritage Books, Inc., 1540-E Pointer Ridge Place, Suite 300, Bowie, Maryland 20716. $19.50 paper bound.)

A reprint of the 1925 Yale University Press edition of Gillett's life as a Texas Ranger.

The Third Texas Cavalry in the Civil War, by Douglas Hale. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1005 Asp Avenue, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-0445. $28.95 cloth bound.)

Texas history enthusiasts may enjoy this new work by Hale, a professor emeritus of history at Oklahoma State University, although most of the action takes place on battlefields north and east of Texas.

Custer's 7th Cavalry, From Fort Riley to the Little Big Horn, by E. Lisle Reedstrom. (Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., 387 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. $14.95 paper bound.)

This edition of Custeriana is excerpted from Reedstrom's 1977 book *Bugles, Banners and War Bonnets.*

Chronicle of the Indian Wars: From Colonial Times to Wounded Knee, by Alan Axelrod. (Prentice Hall, 15 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10023. $25.00 cloth bound.)

This book details the conflicts between Indians and whites since the latter's arrival in North America. Consequently, only about half of the book pertains to the Indian wars west of the Mississippi.

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force to find and destroy Indian villages—culminated in such tragedies as the battles of the Washita and the Little Bighorn.

The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867–1869 is worthwhile reading for those who want the big picture. The story of the "Island of Death" has captured the imaginations of generations of readers of western history. Monnett has done well to remind us that it also captured the imaginations of those in power in 1868, and that the tale of Forsyth's scouts had a lasting effect on western policies.—*Michael Antonucci, Citrus Heights, California.*

Indian Interpretations

Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life, edited by Evan M. Maurer. (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, distributed by University of Washington Press, PO Box 50096, Seattle, Washington 98145-5096. $35.00 paper bound.)

Visions of the People is a beautifully illustrated volume that is both an introduction to Plains Indian art and a survey of Plains Indian history as depicted through art. "*Visions of the People* celebrates the continuing life of the Plains tribes by bringing together a selection of objects that they created to communicate what was most important to them," writes Evan Maurer. The phrase "continuing life" is fundamental as *Visions of the People* addresses an artistic legacy that begins with ancient rock art and remains vibrant today. The inclusion of works by living artists such as Robert Penn, Al Chandler, and Martin Red Bear emphasizes the vitality of Plains Indian art in the 1990s.

Maurer traces the Plains Indian artistic heritage, which dates to at least 2,500 BC, and outlines the unbroken development of Plains Indian art from rock art to the work of modern artists. Louise Lincoln explores the critical role of art in Plains Indian communities from 1875 to 1915, a period of concerted government policies designed to destroy Indian cultures. During that oppressive period, Native American art became a powerful symbol of ethnic pride and helped preserve Indian heritage.

George P. Horse Capture, a noted authority on Plains Indian culture and history, contributes "The Warbonnet: A Symbol of Honor," a personal memoir of his youth on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana. Horse Capture describes how his study of Indian art taught him much about the history of

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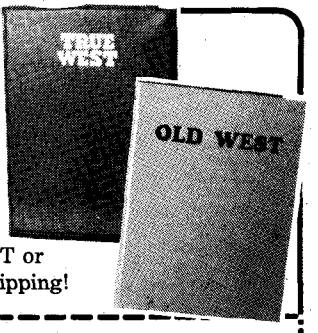

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his people and himself. Horse Capture writes, "Indian art is wonderful. As star quilts cover our beds, warm us in the car, shelter us in the Sun Dance, and color our walls, they are in reality our warbonnets in our enduring culture; they cover the normal and special Indian world with honor, prestige, beauty, and our proud traditions."

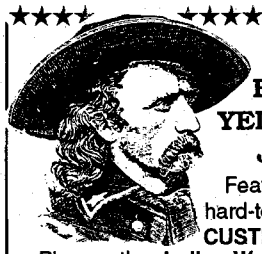
David W. Penney deals with one of the most prominent images of Indian art in "The Horse as Symbol: Equine Representations in Plains Pictographic Art." Penney traces the metamorphosis in depictions of horses from objects of terror when Indians first encountered them, to creatures that became central to Plains Indian cultures. Acquisition of the horse revolutionized Plains Indian life, which Indian art reflects.

In "Akicita Waste (Good Soldier)," Lakota artist and Vietnam veteran Red Bear fuses traditional Lakota styles and modern motifs from the United States Army of the 1960s. "As far back as Lakota history tells us," Red Bear comments, "we as Lakota people have always honored our warriors. In this painting honor is given to all who served in the Vietnam era. We were all a mixture of cultures and became as one. The honor that is shown in the painting 'Akicita Waste' is given from a cultural, aesthetic and a sincere personal point of view."

In "Sacrifice Transformed Into Victory: Standing Bear Portrays Sitting Bull's Sun Dance and the Final Summer of Lakota Freedom," Father Peter J. Powell writes about Minneconjou Lakota artist Standing Bear (1859–1934), whose muslin drawing introduces readers to complex aspects of traditional Lakota religion. The drawing also portrays the camp of the Lakota in 1876 when they experienced the zenith of their formidable military power. That year they defeated troops under General George Crook and Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer.

Father Powell's clear and concise explanations permit Standing Bear to take readers into the Indian camp during the Sun Dance, which the Lakota believed was crucial to their way of life. Standing Bear also depicts the fierce fighting at the Little Bighorn in a section of the drawing. Father Powell is careful and judicious in his discussion of the important work.

Powell's essay exemplifies the quality of the thoughtful writing throughout *Visions of the People*. It is an excellent book.—*Joseph C. Porter, St. Louis, Missouri.*



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Marshal George Brown vs. Three Troublemakers

—June 22, 1882; Caldwell, Kansas—

By BILL O'NEAL

One of the most dangerous communities in the West was Caldwell, Kansas, during its trail town days. The Chisholm Trail from Texas to Abilene opened in 1867, and within a couple of years an enterprising saloon keeper had built a structure alongside the trail and just north of the Kansas-Oklahoma line. A cabin constructed of thick logs, the First Chance Saloon greeted Texas drovers as they came out of Indian Territory; as they rode back toward Texas a Last Chance sign reminded them of the prohibition against liquor in Oklahoma.

In 1871 a few log and frame buildings began to spring up about a mile north of the First Chance-Last Chance saloon. The little town was named Caldwell in honor of a Kansas senator, and most of its ramshackle structures flanked the Chisholm Trail. On July 2, 1871, a drummer named George Peas acquired the dubious distinction of becoming the first man shot to death in Caldwell. The following year Doc Anderson was gunned down while clerking in a store; shortly afterward a man named Fiedler died in a gunfight.

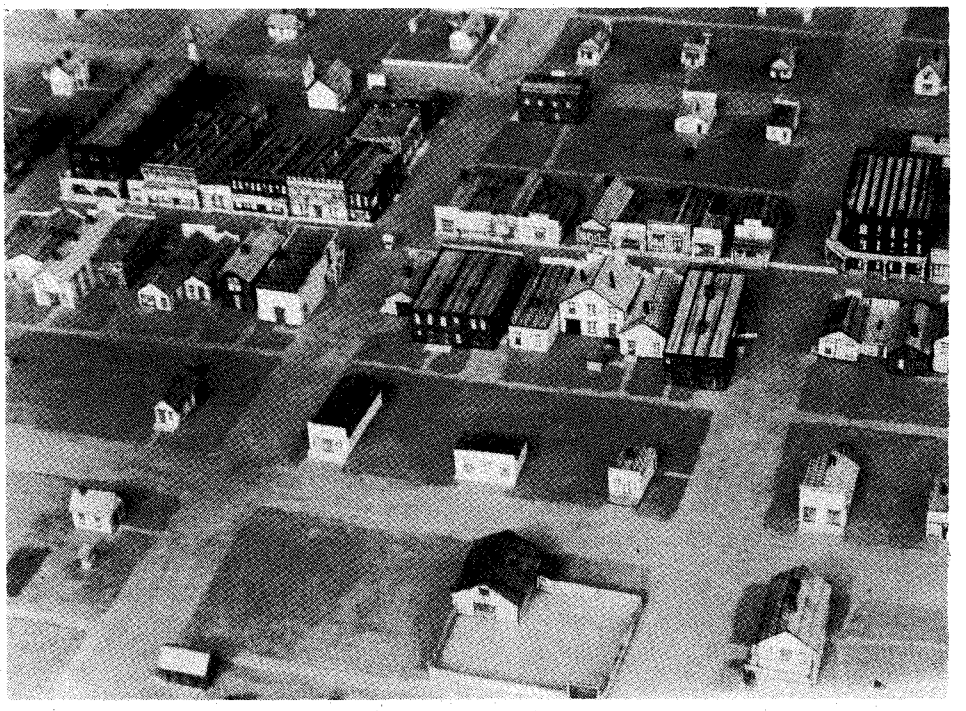
On August 20, 1874, the year in which a grasshopper plague first swept through Caldwell, T.T. Oliver shot a citizen named McCarty to death, then was lynched after dark. In a spectacular 1879 shootout, two-gun man George Flatt barged into the Moreland House to confront Texas cowboys Jake Adams and George Wood. When the smoke cleared Adams and Wood were dead. Flatt served as Caldwell's first marshal, but in 1880 someone assassinated him on Main Street. The chief suspects were Frank Hunt and William Horseman, each of whom also served briefly as Caldwell policemen.

In 1879 George and Mag Woods arrived from Wichita and built the Red Light on a prominent corner of Chisholm Street. The two-story frame gambling hall, saloon, and whorehouse soon became one of the West's most notorious dives. The front area of the lower floor was a bar with gambling tables. In the rear was a dance floor, and upstairs were rooms that the Woods's ten or twelve prostitutes used.

In 1880 Deputy Marshal Frank Hunt was shot to death in the Red Light, and the next year proprietor George Woods himself was killed there. Mag offered a $500 reward for George's killer, Charles Davis. Despite the reward, Davis—who shot George after roughing up one of the girls—escaped into Indian Territory. Mag placed a handsome monument over George's grave in the city cemetery and continued to operate the Red Light.

"Oh, the deeds of crime which have been committed within its walls of iniquity and shame," commented citizen

When Brown and Metcalf entered the premises, the marshal asked the whereabouts of the Texas men. Learning that they were upstairs, the officers started up the stairway. At the top of the stairs stood two men, one with a gun in his hand.



Author's Photo

A scale model of Caldwell during the 1880s was constructed by the author and is housed in the Sumner County Historical Museum. The two-story Red Light is shown in the lower right corner, facing Chisholm Street and opposite a livery stable across Fourth Street. By the 1880s the business district had shifted uphill a block to the west, featuring two three-story brick hotels. The men who killed Marshal Brown raced outside, angling left through alleyways to their horses on Main Street, then galloped south (left) into nearby Indian Territory.

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G.D. Freeman about the Red Light. "Many are the crimes and murders which have been caused by its immoral and vile influence." But the Red Light would play a part in one more murder.

In the spring of 1882, George S. Brown was appointed city marshal. A bachelor, Brown was about twenty-eight and had been in Caldwell for two years, living with his sister Fannie only a block from the Red Light. Freeman considered him "a young man of exceptional good character" but an unlikely marshal because he was "unaccustomed to mingling with the rougher elements of society."

On Thursday, June 22, 1882, a trio of Texas cowboys rode into town from the south. Although it was only 8:00 a.m., they headed for the Red Light and began drinking. Soon they moved their activities upstairs. Two of the men were brothers, Steve and Jess Green, and the third was unknown locally. They were wearing guns in defiance of a local ordinance, and Marshal Brown was informed.

Brown was on Main Street, obtaining signatures to two petitions regarding bond elections. Learning of the armed men, Brown enlisted the aid of Constable Willis Metcalf and walked toward the Red Light. But the lawmen were seen approaching, and the cowboys were warned. They concealed themselves at the head of the stairs.

When Brown and Metcalf entered the premises, the marshal asked the whereabouts of the Texas men. Learning that they were upstairs, the officers started up the stairway. At the top of the stairs stood two men, one with a gun in his hand. Brown grasped his arm and told him to surrender the revolver.

"Let go of me," snarled the armed man, and Brown pinned him against the wall.

The second man seized Metcalf by the throat, and the third produced a six-gun and leveled it at the constable's head. Then the third man emerged from a bedroom and shouted at Brown, "Turn him loose!"

Brown shifted his attention. Instantly his adversary twisted the gun and shot him in the head. Brown died immediately, his brain spattering on the wall and blood from his splintered skull dripping through the floorboards to the room beneath. The cowboys bolted outside, ran uphill to Main Street, unhitched their horses, and galloped toward Indian Territory.

A posse gave chase, but the desperadoes outdistanced them. Fannie Brown became crazed with grief when she learned of her brother's death. Friends carried Brown's body the short distance to his house, and his funeral was held the next day. Fannie Brown later married a Caldwell businessman.

Periodically there had been movements to shut down the Red Light, and finally the city council voted to close it. The pragmatic Mag Woods and her girls abandoned the notorious Red Light and left Caldwell to earn their livings elsewhere.

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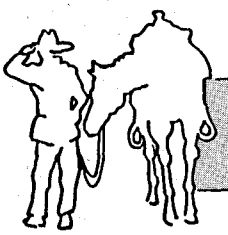

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Caldwell

A Matthew "Old Paint" Caldwell was born in Kentucky and apparently moved to Texas where he participated in the Texas Revolution, signing Texas' declaration of independence. He died at Gonzales, Texas, in December 1842. Both a town and a county were named for him.

I believe this Caldwell may have been of my family. A Matthew Caldwell was born about 1818 in Warren County, Kentucky, and supposedly went to Texas. Does anyone have any information about Caldwells who may have gone to Texas? I would appreciate any information.—**Lynn Pritchett, 2853 Carnaby Lane, Rural Route No. 06, Flower Mound, Texas 75028.**

Smith

I am looking for any information on my great-grandfather, Henry Jasper Smith. He was also called "Bud" Smith. He was born in or around Jasper, Tennessee, on January 7, 1877. I am not sure when or why Bud left Tennessee. He later showed up in Leon County, Texas. He married May Gressett Boykin, and they had three girls, Lela, Ila Fay, and Lydia. Bud would not tell anyone about his past life, and never went back to Tennessee. Bud died on August 31, 1955.—**Larry W. Bell, Route 1, Box 1760, Centerville, Texas 75833.**

Conyers-Leslie

I am looking for information about my grandmother, Pearl Edna Conyers, and her family. She was born in Iowa, possibly at or near the community of Kiron, March 7, 1895. Her family may also have lived at Little Robe and Huron in South Dakota.

Pearl moved to Oklahoma about 1916 and married Robert Howard Leslie, a pharmacist. He was born in the com-

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munity of Ferrie (Ferry?), Texas, March 9, 1895. The couple may have spent some time in the Colorado towns of Trinidad and Branson, and in Des Moines, New Mexico, before returning to Oklahoma. I would appreciate hearing from anyone with information about the Conyerses or the Leslies.—**Steve Jones, 102 West Tyler, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74075.**

Dow

I would appreciate hearing from anyone with information about my father, a rodeo rider who went by the name of Little John Adam Dow. He was a bronc rider in the 1930s—until 1938—and my mother and I traveled with him. Later he was an itinerant farmer. I would like to hear from anyone who knew him. He died in November 1973.—**Ruth Sage, PO Box 74, Lancaster, Kansas 66041.**

Sheik

I am looking for information about a Carl Sheik (the last name was originally spelled Schiek), born to John Schiek and Anna Koegler at either Kanopolis or Brookville, Kansas, about 1895. They moved to Texas between 1904 and 1906, and to Newkirk, Oklahoma, in 1909 or 1910. Carl's brothers, all now deceased, were John, Pete, Raymond, and Vincent. His sisters were Louise, Anna, Teresa, Helen, and Rosemary. Helen and Rosemary are still living.—**Robert Sheik, RR 1, Box 13, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096.**

Nunley

I am trying to find information about my great-grandfather, George Washington Nunley. He fought in the Civil War and lived in Oklahoma. He was born in Ashdown, Arkansas, on the Nunley plantation. Upon returning from the war, he settled in Idabel, Oklahoma, on forty acres the government gave his family.—**George Washington Nunley, III, 2809 Monroe, Kansas City, Missouri 64128.**

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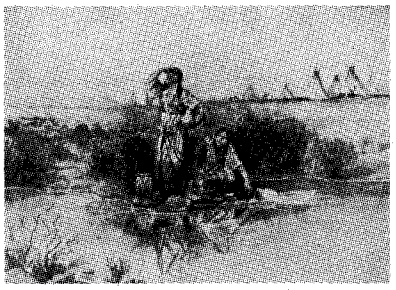

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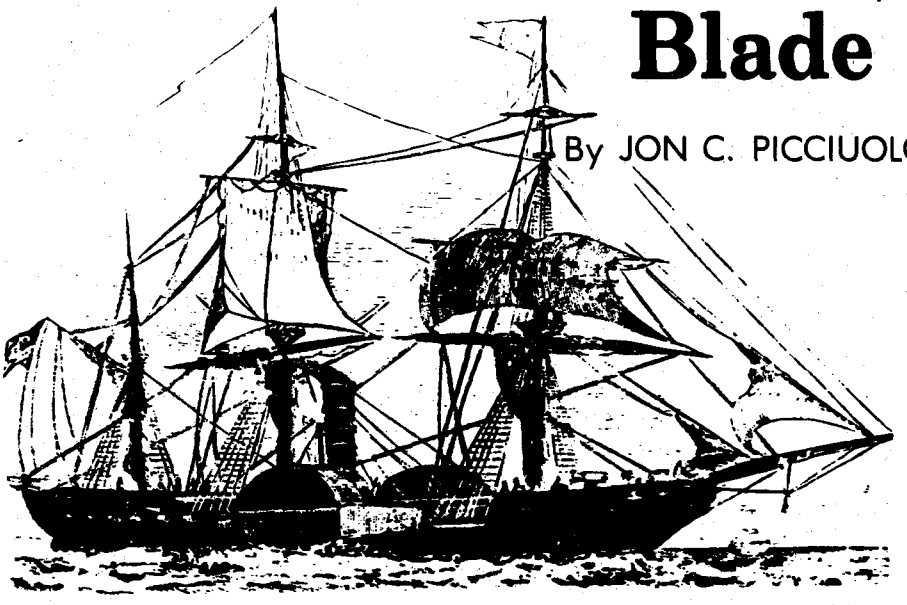
Wreck of the Yankee Blade

By JON C. PICCIUOLO



Courtesy of the Author

The paddle wheel steamer, *Yankee Blade*.

Not far from Santa Barbara, California, on Vandenberg Air Force Base, lies one of the Pacific Coast's most notorious stretches. Some people swear the land is unlucky, others say it is cursed, for the place has been the site of a string of deadly disasters. One of the first was the sinking of the *Yankee Blade* in 1854. Navigational error hastened the vessel's end, but mutiny and greed turned the grounding into a nightmare.

The *Yankee Blade* was an 1,800-ton, state-of-the-art paddle wheel steamer, the pride of Cornelius Vanderbilt's Independent Line. Vanderbilt, determined to corner the market on Gold Rush ocean travel to and from San Francisco, offered cut-rate fares and demanded speed from his captains; each day sliced off a voyage was money in his pocket.

On September 30, 1854, the *Yankee Blade* departed San Francisco for Panama. There the passengers were to cross the isthmus by mule and rail, then board another Vanderbilt steamer to New York.

The *Yankee Blade*'s skipper was Henry Randall, a trusted veteran of both Atlantic and Pacific sea routes. Sailing with him were about 120 crewmen and 800 passengers, many wearing money belts crammed with gold nuggets and dust. Locked in the ship's vault was nearly a half-ton of precious dust destined for the coinage mints of the eastern United States. Lurking below decks were as many as thirty stowaways—desperate criminals fleeing San Francisco's rough justice.

Captain Randall set a southerly course at high speed, racing against the steamer *Sonora* to win a $5,000 bet. The sea was patchy with fog; soon the *Yankee Blade* pulled far ahead of the cautious *Sonora*. By the following afternoon the fog had thickened, but Randall was unconcerned, thinking that he was still far out to sea.

Through a break in the haze, one passenger caught a glimpse of a rocky shoreline. Randall ignored the report.

At 3:30 p.m., October 1, while the captain was sipping a drink in the ship's saloon, the *Yankee Blade* slammed onto a reef just off Point Pedernales. A stone fang ripped through the two-foot thick oak hull and held the ship fast.

Captain Randall knew that his vessel was lost and in danger of splintering apart in the pounding surf. His duty was to evacuate the passengers, including women and children, to safety, but steep cliffs loomed between the wreck and the haven of the shore.

Randall and several crewmen rowed away in a lifeboat to search for a landing beach. While they were gone, a panicked mob commandeered another *Yankee Blade* boat. The lowering mechanism failed and the boat plunged into the sea. People aboard the wreck launched other lifeboats without the captain's permission; two were swamped, a third was swept miles down the coast. Many passengers drowned, their bulging money belts dragging them down. A few remaining lifeboats, under the command of the ship's officers, slowly shuttled passengers to the safe landing site the captain had found.

Meanwhile, aboard the *Yankee Blade*, stowaways and rogue crewmen took advantage of the absence of the officers. Waving knives and pistols, they robbed passengers and broke into First Class staterooms. They tried to loot the ship's vault, but the stern had settled underwater, protecting the precious cargo. Frustrated, the terrorists smashed into the saloon. Then, crazed with liquor, they attacked women and murdered for gold. To extort the last dollar from desperate passengers, they sold life preservers. The ringleaders heaped a lifeboat with plunder and tried to escape, but their boat flipped over in the breakers close to shore.

By then it was dark. Ashore, Captain Randall pleaded for volunteers to row him back to the wreck, but no one stepped forward. The captain remained on the beach all night, listening to gunfire and pitiful cries for help from passengers who assumed that he had deserted them. All through the night the ship's bell tolled grimly.

At daybreak, rescue operations resumed. Miraculously, help arrived. The little steamer *Goliah*, en route to San Diego, spotted the shipwreck.

Goliah's captain removed the remaining passengers, subdued the rioters, and sent supplies ashore. Shortly after the last *Yankee Blade* passenger clambered off the ship, the crippled vessel broke in two. *Goliah* delivered its human cargo to San Diego, then steamed back to fetch Captain Randall and other beached survivors and take them to San Francisco. A few passengers made their way overland to Santa Barbara. About thirty victims, some murdered, were buried in sandy graves near the wreck.

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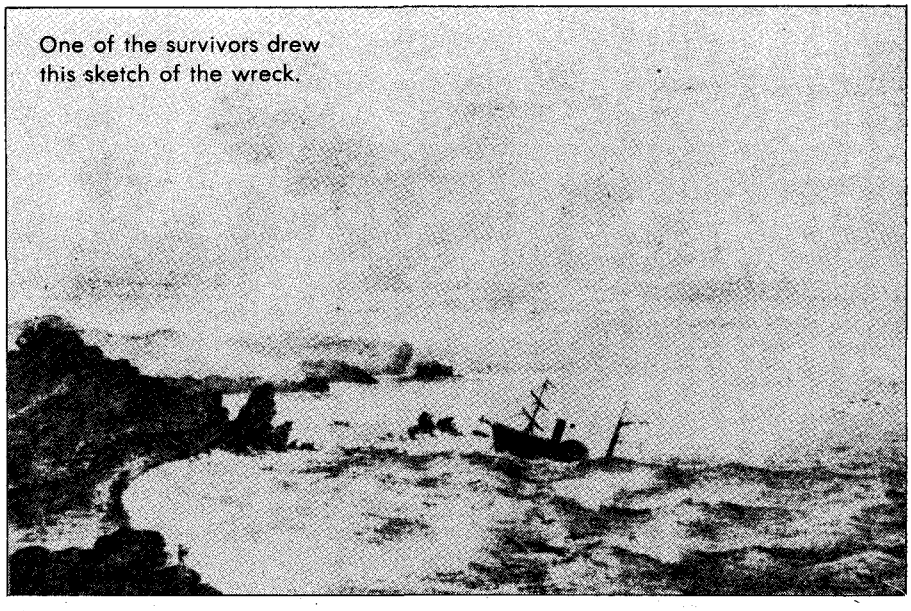


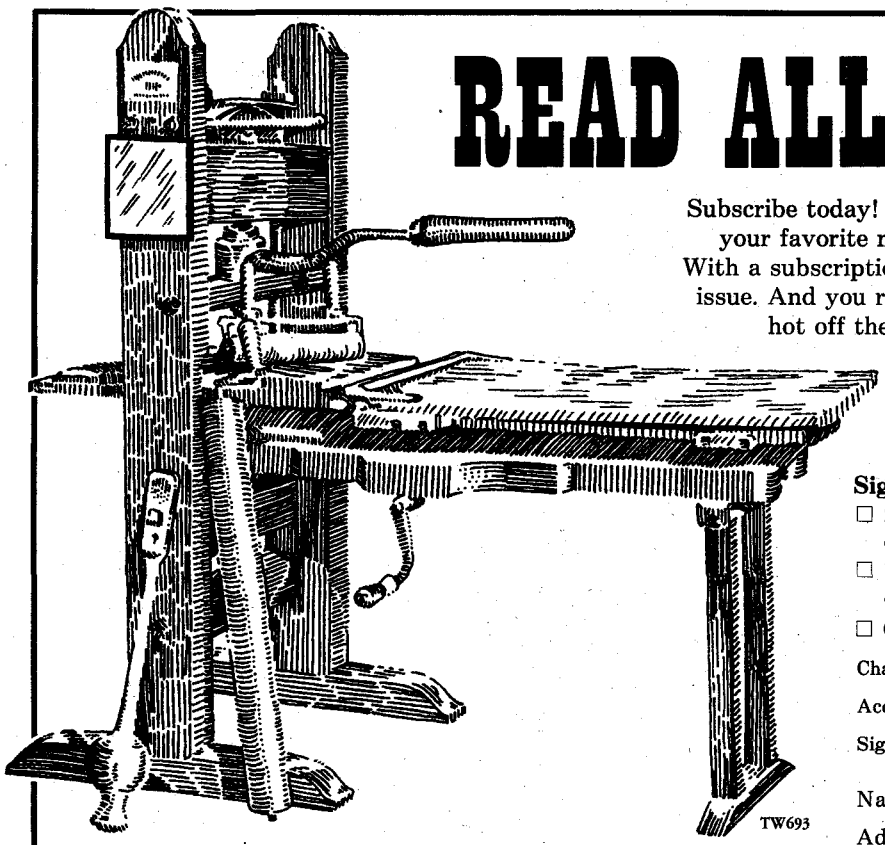
One of the survivors drew this sketch of the wreck.

Captain Randall himself supervised salvage operations, which began almost immediately. Using primitive techniques, divers recovered the contents of the *Yankee Blade*'s vault from as deep as sixty feet. However they never salvaged the lost plunder or the gold that dragged some drowning victims to their deaths; that treasure still lies hidden in the storm-churned sands.

Despite complaints from passengers, a formal court of inquiry quickly cleared Captain Randall—after all, he had saved many lives. His share of the cargo salvage fee was reportedly in excess of $80,000. The wretched survivors were refunded only twenty-five percent of their fares. The murderous stowaways and mutineers may have been punished, but records are incomplete.

In recent years, sport divers visiting the wreck site have recovered a cannon, brass portholes, and other souvenirs, including a few pieces of gold. Divers report that chunks of bunker coal are scattered across the ocean bottom and rusty fragments of the ship's paddle wheel and steam engine are visible. An ornately carved eagle broke free during the shipwreck and drifted southward; it is now on display in the Santa Barbara Historical Society museum.

The 1854 wreck of the *Yankee Blade* was one of the first disasters to occur on that treacherous stretch of California coast. California's deadliest railroad accident happened nearby; coincidentally, the United States Navy's worst peacetime loss—seven destroyers—took place in 1923 only a few yards from the *Yankee Blade*'s final resting place.



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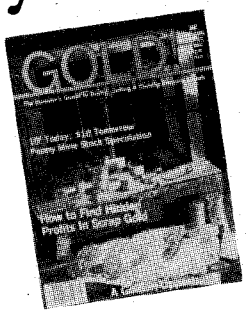

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